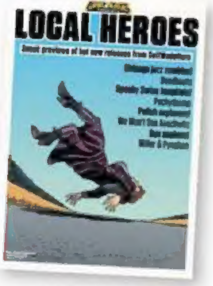
INCLUDES 80 BONUS PAGES OF COMIC STRIPS!

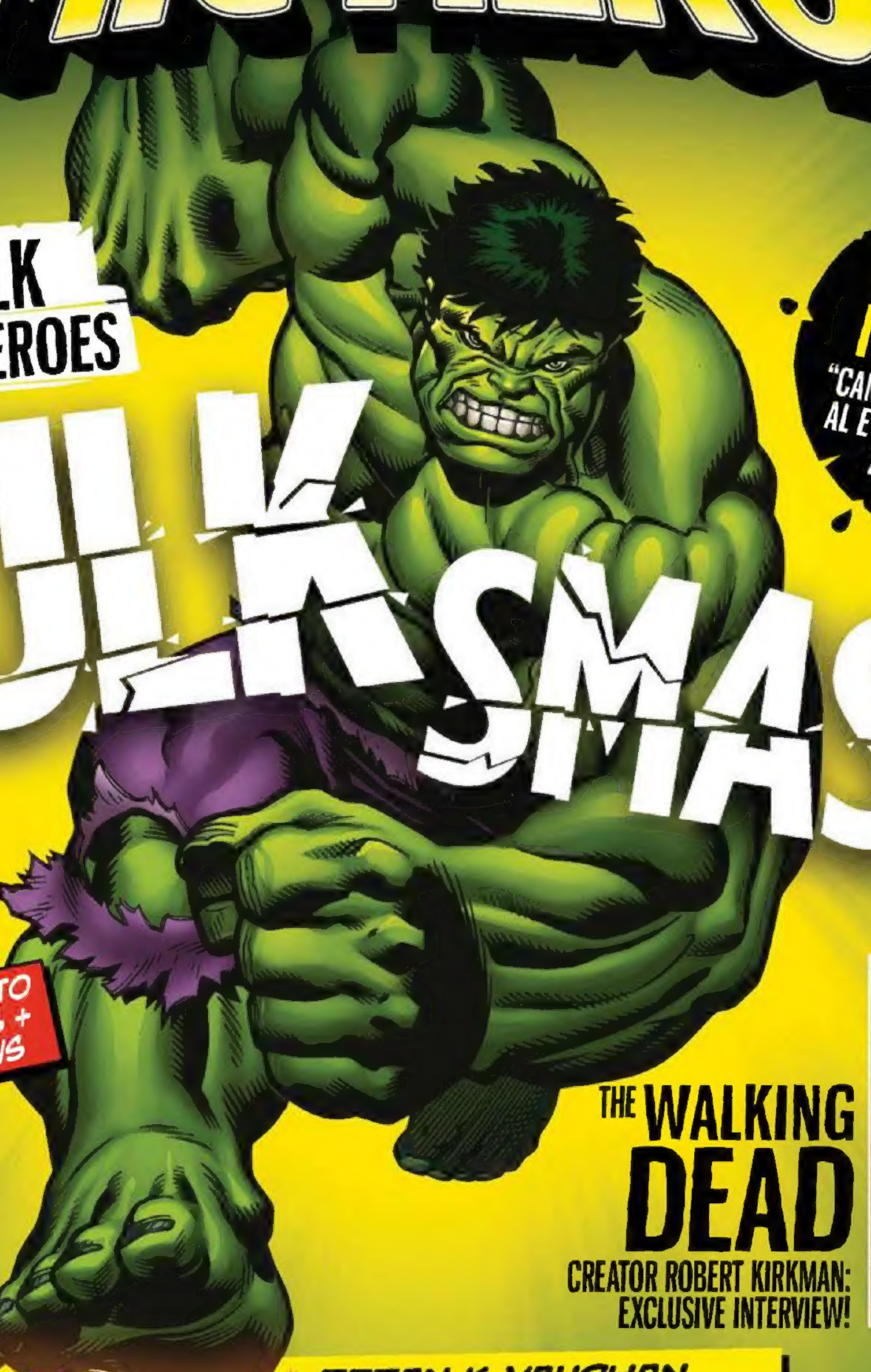


GIANT SIDEKICK SAMPLER PLUS COMIC HEROES PRESENTS: LOCAL HEROES

124 PAGES OF COMIC CULTURE

COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • MOVIES • TV • GAMES

COMIC HEROES



HOW HULK REDEFINED HEROES

HULK SMASH!

INSIDE!
THE ZOMBO INTERVIEW!
"CAN I EAT YOU, PLEASE?" AL EWING ON 2000 AD'S ZOMBIE SMASH

PLUS: HERE BE MONSTERS!
ULTIMATE CREATURE COUNTDOWN

EXCLUSIVE GUIDES TO 20 HORRIFIC HEROES + IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

FEATURING:
- HULK
- THING
- MAN-THING
- HEAP
- SWAMP THING
- DEATHLOK

THE WALKING DEAD
CREATOR ROBERT KIRKMAN: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

THEY TALK! BRIAN WOOD • BRIAN K VAUGHAN • GARTH ENNIS • KEVIN MACGUIRE • CHARLES BURNS • ANDY KUBERT • CLIFF CHIANG • AND HERB TRIMPE!

Future

Hot Toys ®
THE DARK KNIGHT RISES
1/4TH SCALE
BATMAN
COLLECTIBLE FIGURE

FULL RANGE AVAILABLE AT
WWW.MOTHERSBASEMENT.CO.UK

DC LOGO TM & © DC Comics 2012; WB SHIELD TM & © Warner Bros Entertainment 2012

INSIDE!

Comic Heroes Jan/Feb 2013

FEATURES

30 MONSTER MASH
The 20 most violent, touching, intriguingly warped man-creatures in comics...

37 HULK SMASH!
...plus the gamma powered daddy of them all!

44 DEATHLOK
Inventing the future, with Rich Buckler.

48 GEOFF JOHNS
Aquaman, *Justice League* and more...

52 MAN-THING
Celebrating the elephant-snouted shambler.

56 PAT MILLS TALKS SATANUS
Plus Hook Jaw, Shako, Old One Eye, and why nature *always* wins...

60 JONATHAN HICKMAN
From the Fantastic Four to the Avengers, with Marvel's rising star...

66 ROBERT KIRKMAN
The creator of *The Walking Dead* speaks!

70 ZOMBO
He's the world's most polite brain-eater, explain creators Henry Flint and Al Ewing.

76 YOUNG AVENGERS
Indie kids Gillen and McKelvie take over Marvel's premier teen gang.

80 ACES WEEKLY
Thought you'd seen the last of new weekly British comic anthology launches? Not yet!

82 SWAMP THING
How it changed comics, by Steve Bissette, John Totleben and Rick Veitch...

REGULARS

14 SHAPERS OF WORLDS
Exclusive interviews with Andy Kubert, Garth Ennis, Brian K Vaughan and more...

64 HIDDEN GEMS
Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*: monster of rock.

74 JUDGE JAMES
Meet Dell Comics' superhero monsters. Should have been a win-win. Sadly wasn't.

92 WORLD OF COMICS
The weird and wonderful Charles Burns, master of unleashing the beast within.

112 WORLD'S FINEST
Monster maker Herb Trimpe, the definitive Hulk artist, and first guy to draw Wolverine!

DEPARTMENTS

04 HEAT VISION
News from NYCC, Morrisoncon and more, plus: Guardians of the Galaxy!

97 REVIEWS
The best new comics and such reviewed!

120 SUBSCRIBE
Get every monster issue straight to your door. (And save some pennies too.)

122 BIG ISSUES
'The Anatomy Lesson': it's the issue where Swamp Thing *changed*...

BEAST WARS!

Sometimes, as I'm sure you'll find, all those perfect superheroes and heroines, with their flat stomachs and buns of steel, can get a bit much. Yes, Stan Lee and his children can ram them full of personal problems, make us feel sorry for them temporarily, but still: these guys look amazing, everyone loves them, and half of them can fly, for goodness sake. How bad can life be? Hurrah, then, for the *other* guys: the ones with real problems, who can't help smashing tanks to bits, or whose meat-and-veg have turned into just plain old veg, and moss-covered at that.

These are the properly compelling characters, the ones life has dealt a truly evil hand to, and this issue we celebrate them: Swamp Thing, who thinks too much; Man-Thing, who doesn't really think at all; Deathlok, whose thinking is interrupted by a pesky 'puter; Satanus, who mostly thinks about where his next meal is coming from; Zombo, who knows his next meal is that soft thing you keep tucked away right behind your eyes; and Hulk, whose head hurts when he thinks too much, and who's never been great at making (or, at least, keeping) friends. Plus Dracula, Hook Jaw, Hellboy, the Demon, Vampirella and the rest of the Whole Sick Crew.

It's an issue with other treats too – including chats with some of the most important creators in comics – but the monsters are what stick with us. We don't want to *be* them, but damn, they're compelling...

Matt Bielby,
Editor

Matt

YOUR FREE GIFTS!

GIANT SIZE
SIDEKICK
THE BEST NEW COMICS PREVIEWED INSIDE!
52 PAGES OF SAVAGE COMICS!
GREAT WHITE!
SHAKO
HIT-GIRL
THERE WILL BE BLOOD...
Plus

1. GIANT-SIZE SIDEKICK!

Our companion mag goes from strength to strength, 52 pages of high-quality comic strip on slick paper at a nice luxurious size. And this month we've two big themes going on: classic British tales, and young girls taking matters into their own hands. (Actually, there's a third theme too: ultra-violence, as you'll swiftly discover when you read it!) From the olden days: the adventures of *Shako* from *2000 AD*, a hyper-violent take on *Hook Jaw* and Richard Adams' *Shardik*, plus classic *Battle* war strip *Johnny Red*. From the girls: the charming *August Moon*, and the equally charming (but in her own way) *Hit-Girl*.

LOCAL HEROES

2. COMIC HEROES PRESENTS

It's a third issue for our new single character, publisher or theme companion comic, this time celebrating the arty, award-winning work of SelfMadeHero, with samples of four absolute classics: *Pachyderme*, *Deadbeats*, *Miller & Pynchon* and *We Won't See Auschwitz*. All are tales that prove being literary doesn't mean you can't also be fun; you can expect everything from talking crocs to lazy elephants in these pages...

MONSTER SQUAD

Think of them like Rachel van Helsing and co: but who's their favourite monster?

MIKE PERKINS

Zombies are cool. Super Soldiers are cool. Splice and slice them together and you have Deathlok. The greatest comic book monster ever, and well before his time. Rich Buckler and co really hit upon something magic here.

JOEL MEADOWS

You may not think of him as a monster, but on some level *he* surely does, and that's what counts: yes, it's Doctor Doom. Lee and Kirby knew how to mix strong visuals and deep issues, and few are stronger or deeper than Doom.

JAMES LOVEGROVE

Any of the creatures Ditko and Kirby drew because, well, Ditko and Kirby. Simon Garth, the zombie, because he looks so lonely. And *Watchmen*'s Ozymandias, because he's the perfect human, and thus the perfect monster.

PAUL GRAVETT

Before Swamp Thing et al there was the original muck monster, The Heap. I discovered him in lurid '70s mag *Psycho*, only later finding his first great stories in old *Airboy Comics*, now in deluxe reprint from PS Art Books.

STEPHEN JEWELL

Just like comics in general, my life was completely changed after I read Alan Moore's DC debut in *Saga Of The Swamp Thing* #20, 'Loose Ends', in 1984. Loved the Dan Day art – and 'The Anatomy Lesson' was still to come!

MATT BIELBY

I've always been very fond of the Abomination: I like his fish-lips, his weird ears, and the fact that I actually worried for the Hulk when they fought. Ol' greenskin's been up against an army of monsters, but this guy's the champ.

WorldMags

HEAT VISION

THE HOTTEST NEWS FOR ALL THINGS COMICS!

Galaxy Defenders

With a movie scheduled for 2014, it was only a matter of time before the 31st century superheroes got their own book. **By Stephen Jewell**

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY
#1
BENDIS·MCNIVEN
MARVEL NOW!
DELL·PONSOR
JOIN THE REVOLUTION
FREE
AR
001

Aside from being part of the vast canvas of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning's superhero space opera *Annihilation: Conquest*, The Guardians of the Galaxy have never been one of the mainstays of the Marvel Universe. Created by Arnold Drake and Gene Colan, they made their debut in the pages of *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 in 1969 but have only sporadically commanded their own title in the four decades since, most notably when Jim Valentino helmed a 1990 launch that subsequently ran for 62 issues.

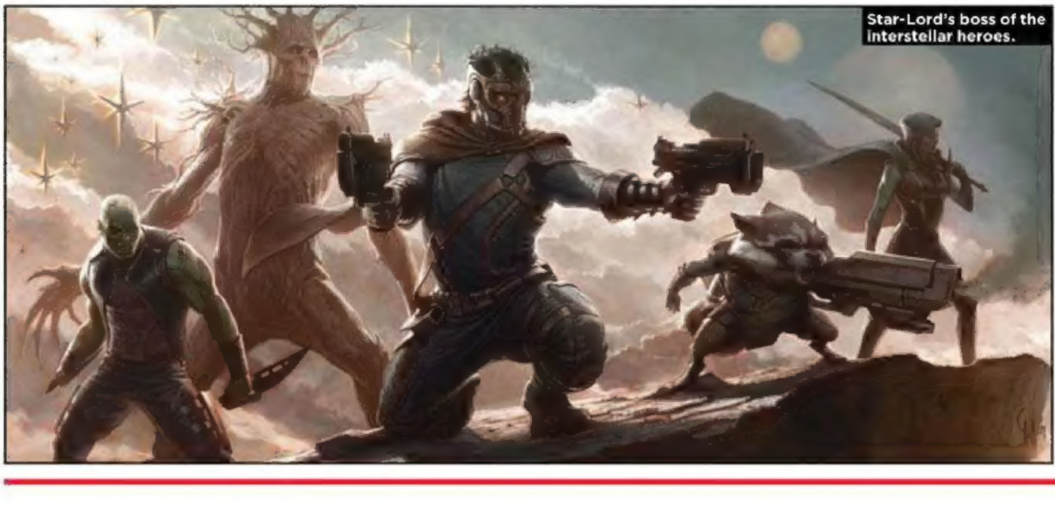
But with a James Gunn-directed feature film scheduled for August 2014, it was surely only a matter of time before the rag-tag band of space-faring warriors – which currently consists of Star-Lord, Gamora, Groot, Rocket Raccoon, Drax the Destroyer, Bug and (wait for it: Iron Man!) was once again granted its own ongoing title. Beginning with a special 0.1 issue in February before spinning off into a monthly series in March, penning *Guardians Of The Galaxy* is another childhood dream come true for Brian Michael Bendis, who, after concluding his marathon eight-year *Avengers* stint, also recently assumed the reins of *All-New X-Men*.

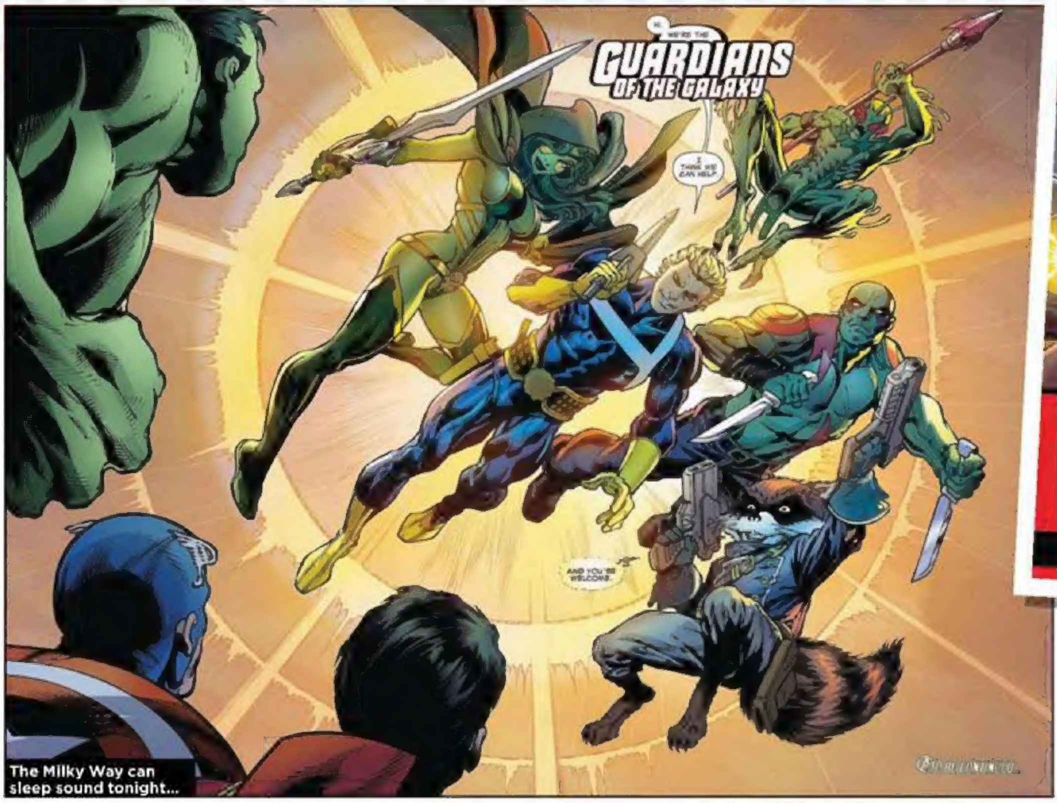
"It's pretty clear from all my work – including every chance I got in *Avengers* – that I love what to some people are esoteric '70s characters," he says. "I have a lot of affection for all the Guardians, particularly Star-Lord, who was my favourite because of John Byrne – I'd buy whatever he did back then." He's referring to Star-Lord's appearance in 1977's *Marvel Preview* #11, which was helmed by the then-*Uncanny X-Men* team of Chris Claremont, John Byrne and Terry Austin.

"I really like funky cosmic '70s Marvel a great deal, and I've done a bit of Killraven and the Illuminati in the past, but I kind of danced around it while I was working on *Avengers* as Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning were working on their cosmic odyssey. It just seemed best to leave them alone, so I put it out of my head."

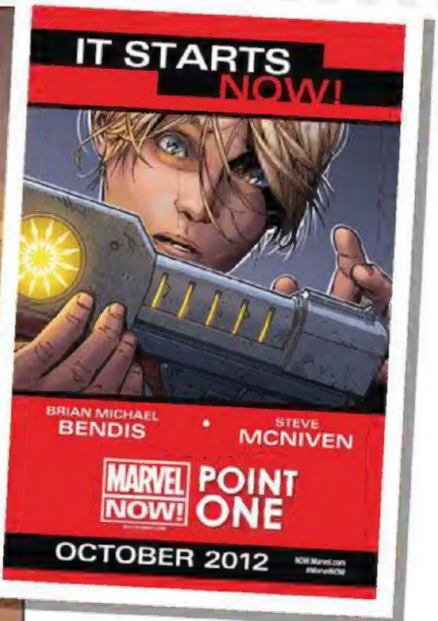
After Abnett and Lanning finally brought their epic storyline to a close with *The Thanos Imperative* in 2011, Bendis was persuaded to take up the mantle by Marvel publisher Dan Buckley, who charged him with turning the Guardians into A-list superheroes.

"I want to bring them closer to

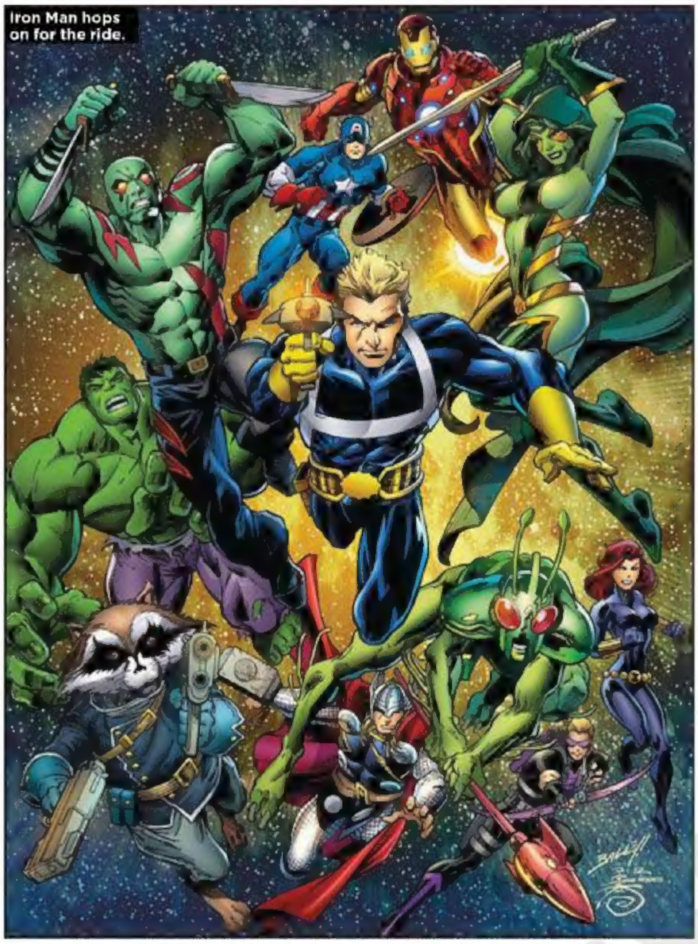

Star-Lord's boss of the interstellar heroes.



The Milky Way can sleep sound tonight...



“I really like funky, cosmic ’70s Marvel a great deal”



Iron Man hops on for the ride.

the centre of the Marvel Universe but without losing what it is that makes them special,” he explains. “There are fans of cosmic stories like myself who don’t care *where* the Guardians are in the galaxy, but there are a great many others who don’t look in on them because they’re not involved in what’s going on in the Marvel U.”

According to Bendis, Star-Lord – aka Peter Quill – is the key figure in the Guardians. “It was while I was doing my research for the movie that I came across his origin story, which I’d read years ago when I was a kid, although I’d long forgotten it,” he says, referring to the old issues of *Marvel Preview*. “It’s only two pages long, but from a story structure point of view, it’s as good an origin as Superman or Spider-Man – it’s just that no one knows it. It’s one of those little jewels that you uncover, like I did with Luke Cage or Spider-Woman. It made me love the character all over again and want to figure out the rest of his journey.”

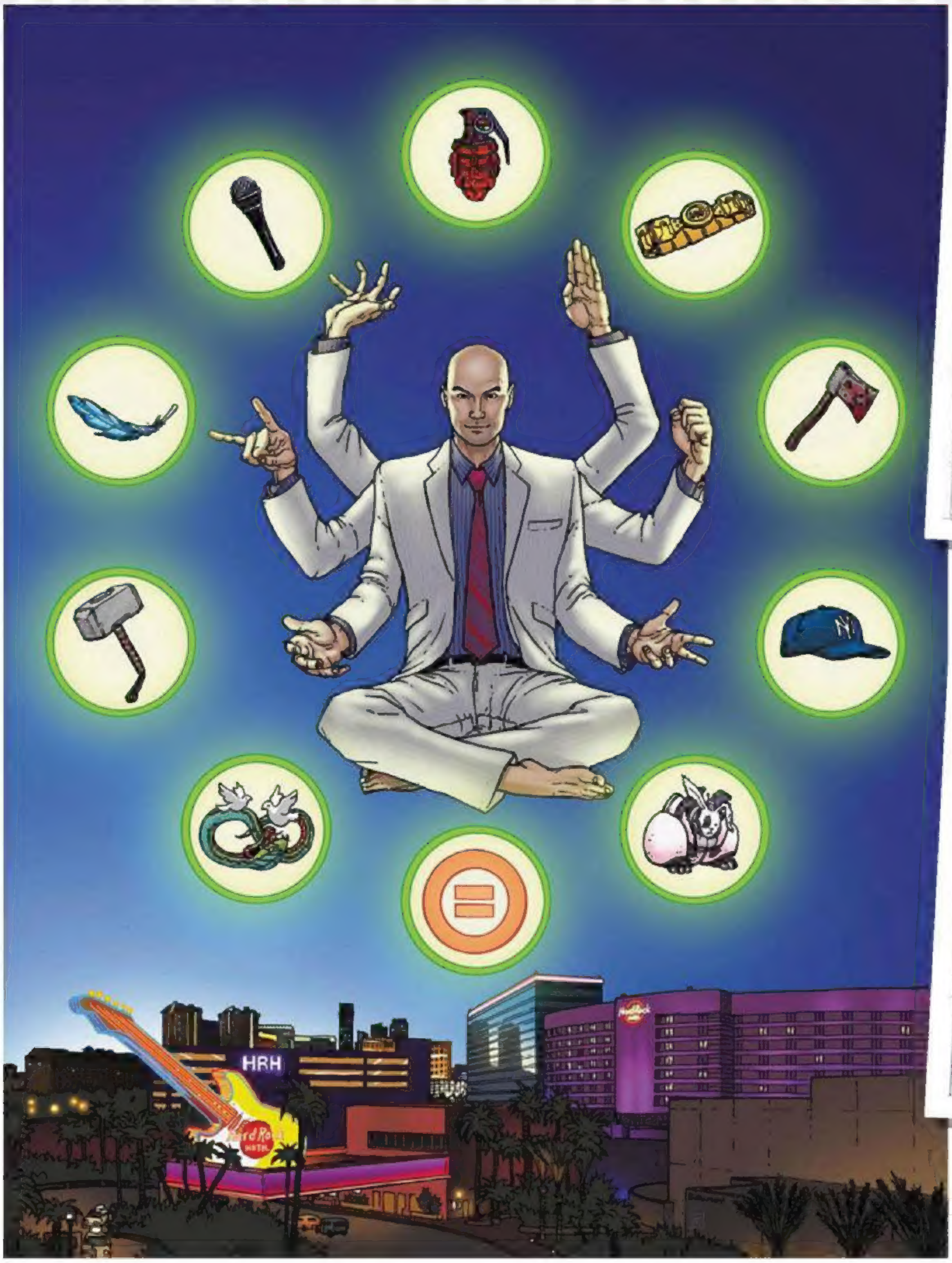
The son of the exiled prince of the Spartol Empire who crash-landed in the Colorado Mountains and impregnated a local before leaving for the stars again, Peter Quill only discovers his true identity years later when some less-friendly aliens arrive and kill his mother. “We’re going to adapt it Ultimate-style, and really take some time with it,” says Bendis, who was as surprised as anyone when he was allowed to add Iron Man to the line-up.

“It’s one of the things that we’re doing that’s already controversial, according to my Twitter feed,” he laughs. “I came to Marvel with the idea that if the Guardians really are going to be part of the Marvel U, what would really help would be if there was a proper Marvel U character who joins them. I had a list of characters that I thought I might be able to get my hands on, and Tony Stark wasn’t one of them – I didn’t think there was any way in hell that could happen. But when we talked about, to my surprise, Kieron Gillen, who had got the job on *Iron Man* but hadn’t started yet, suggested it should be Tony, and he was voted onto the team. So he now gets to do a few stories of Tony Stark in space, which will be a blast!”

After pitting the Guardians and Earth’s Mightiest Heroes against Thanos in his recent *Avengers Assemble* arc, Bendis will initially concentrate on other equally formidable cosmic beings.

“There are a lot of different empires in the Marvel U, and also a lot of very powerful characters who make some big, bold moves,” he teases. “You’ll see the Kree, the Brood, the Badoon and how Asgard fits into all of this. You’re going to see a lot of characters making plays for the Earth because of a change that happens in the book itself. There’ll also be some new characters. There’s been a lot of damage done to the cosmos and the galaxy over the past few years, so there are a lot of butterfly effects: for things that are happening on Earth that might not seem too significant but, when they go across the galaxy, the effect will be huge.” **CH**

Bendis’ take on The Guardians kicks off in February.



Rock Star

Legendary Scottish author Grant Morrison hosts his very own, highly enjoyable, Comic-Con at Vegas' Hard Rock Hotel. **By Stephen Jewell**

There are not many comic book creators who could lend their name to an entire comic book convention. But during the final weekend of September, the inaugural – and possibly one and only – Morrisoncon was held at Las Vegas' Hard Rock Hotel.

However, the intimate event was far from a self-aggrandising ego trip as has been cynically suggested by some online critics who weren't actually there. Instead it was a rare opportunity for the select, 1,000-strong audience to spend some quality time with not just the legendary Scottish author himself but also the other nine prominent guests, which included JH Williams, Chris Burnham, Jim Lee, Jason Aaron, Robert Kirkman and Jonathan Hickman.

Rather than the usual PR-oriented panels, we were treated to refreshingly freewheeling talks on esoteric subjects such as 'The Future of the Third Millennium' and 'The Invisibles and the Pre-Apocalypse', which according to the Mayan Long Calendar occurs on December 22, so hopefully we'll all still be around to read this issue of *Comic Heroes*!

Proceedings kicked off with a special one-off performance by Morrison and his friends Gerard Way and James Dewees from My Chemical Romance. Charting Liberace's battle to the death with Howard Hughes for the lost soul of Sin City itself, 'The Con' perfectly summed up the brilliantly surreal experience of Morrisoncon. "This

IGNITION SEQUENCE IS PROUD TO PRESENT
MORRISONCON
SEPTEMBER 28 - 30, 2012 AT THE HARD ROCK HOTEL, LAS VEGAS

A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE CURATED BY IGNITION SEQUENCE AND
GRANT MORRISON

FEATURING
ROBERT KIRKMAN, DARICK ROBERTSON, JASON AARON, JIM LEE, GERARD WAY, JONATHAN HICKMAN, FRANK QUITELY, J.H. WILLIAMS III and CHRIS BURNHAM

Also: JAMES GUNN, MAX LANDIS, JIMMY URINE, AKIRA THE DON

> **“Vegas isn’t real so it’s a great location for something like this”**

place is the capital of illusion, as we said last night,” reflects Morrison when I catch up with him the next day. “Nothing is real, so it’s a great location for something like this.”

With his gravelly Scottish timbre contrasting starkly with Way and Dewees’ hypnotic ambient beats, the mesmerising 30-minute piece suggests that Morrison could have had a career on the stage with his old band The Fauves if comic books hadn’t come calling.

“I wanted to do something that was unrepeatable and special, so we might never do it again,” admits Morrison, who is unsure whether a recorded version will be released. “There was originally more material and more music so we might eventually record a full version.”

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

While company-sponsored panels were conspicuous by their absence, DC representatives were on hand as *Multiversity* – Morrison’s long-mooted magnum opus that centres on DC’s myriad universes – was finally announced.

“It kept getting pushed to the back because I had deadlines for everything else I was doing,” says Morrison, who found room in his schedule to finally pen the eight-issue, double-sized miniseries after electing to bring both his *Action Comics* and *Batman Inc* stints to a close in February and May respectively.

A long-time fan of DC’s numerous universes, Morrison was disappointed when they were reduced to a single continuum following 1985’s *Crisis On Infinite Earths*. “One of the first comics I bought was *Justice League* #46, which had the Justice League and the Justice Society teaming up to fight Anti-Matter Man,” recalls Morrison, who has dedicated much of his four-decade-long DC career to restoring its alternate worlds in blockbuster series such as *Final Crisis*. “I’d never heard of Doctor Fate and Wildcat, so that stuff has fascinated me since I was a kid.”

Due in mid-2013, *Multiversity* has also been a long time coming as a result of artist Frank Quitely’s notoriously slow work rate. “He’s like our pace car, so we’re making sure that he has a head start before everybody else gets started,” explains Morrison, who will also collaborate with frequent foils Cameron Stewart and Fraser Irving.

“The first issue is like a book-end as #1 and #8 are part of the same big story. It sets up a threat that each of the worlds deals with differently. Each of them has also got comic books that tell stories from the previous issue, so it’s like they’re communicating through the medium of comics.”

While he has broken through the Fourth Wall in the past in titles such as *Animal Man*, Morrison is uncomfortable with the meta-fiction tag. “It bugs me because it’s like a literary device but this is something more concrete,” he reasons. “It goes back to that old Flash story ‘The Flash of Two Worlds’, where Barry Allen gets his superhero name after reading an old comic about the ’40s Flash, Jay Garrick. He then travels to Earth 2, where he meets their Flash, who is now 20 years older. It was more to do with that and getting back to the roots of these things: how do you develop that whole idea of vibration into something bigger? It was more about those elements that were all present in the first DC parallel world story.”

Quitely will illustrate ‘Pax Americana’ – in many ways *Multiversity*’s centrepiece – which takes place in the erstwhile Charlton universe, which Alan Moore famously used as a template for *Watchmen*. “Just as *Watchmen* was based on the murder of the Comedian, our story is based on the murder of the US president by the Peacemaker,” reveals Morrison, who compares it to ’70s political thrillers like *The Parallax View* and *The Day Of The Jackal*.

“It’s a very different kind of mystery as it goes backwards through the president’s life, and not always chronologically. After the first three pages, we jump further and further back in time until there’s a kind of Rosebud reveal at the end,” he continues, referring to *Citizen Kane*’s iconic concluding plot twist.

“I’m really excited. It’s like the most primal image of superheroes ever. It makes you want to go back to the start to read it all again.” **CH**

*Expect **Multiversity** some time in 2013. Probably.*

FROM THE MAKERS OF SFX MAGAZINE
COMIC HEROES

Future Publishing Ltd: 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW
Email: comicheroes@futurenet.com
Web: www.comicheroesmagazine.com

EDITORIAL
Editor: Matt Bielby
matt.bielby@futurenet.com
Art Editor: Mark Mitchell
mark.mitchell@futurenet.com
Production Editor: Andrea Ball
andrea.ball@futurenet.com
***SFX* Editor-in-Chief:** Dave Bradley
david.bradley@futurenet.com
***SFX* Art Editor:** Jonathan Coates
jonathan.coates@futurenet.com

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
David Currie, Brian Fields, Alex Fitch, Paul Gravett, Stephen Jewell, James Lovegrove, Joe McCabe, Paul Marland, Joel Meadows, Pat Mills, Michael Molcher, Mike Perkins

ADDITIONAL LAYOUT
Mark Critchell

Hulk wallet image © 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.

Giant-Size Sidekick and Comic Heroes Presents
All material © the respective copyright holders

Matt would like to thank: all of Marvel’s modest monsters of the early ’60s for fun and hilarity, including: Bruttu!, Fin Fang Foom!, Gargantus!, Goliath!, Goom!, Goo-Gam!, Gorgolla!, Grogg!, Groot!, Grottu!, Gruto! Kraa the Unhuman!, Krang!, Mister Morgan’s Monster!, Moomba!, Orrgo!, Rommbu!, Shagg!, Spagg, the Living Hill!, the Two-Headed Thing! and Zzutak!

ADVERTISING
Advertising Manager: Adrian Hill
01225 442244, adrian.hill@futurenet.com
Sales Director: Nick Weatherall
020 7042 4155, nick.weatherall@futurenet.com
Digital Ad Manager: Andrew Church
020 7042 4237, andrew.church@futurenet.com

MARKETING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
Group Marketing Manager: Sam Wight
020 7042 4061, sam.wight@futurenet.com
Senior Marketing Executive: Tilly Michell
020 7042 4077, tilly.michell@futurenet.com
Marketing Executive: Antonella Matia
020 7042 4025, antonella.matia@futurenet.com
Direct Marketing: Ashley Hickman
ashley.hickman@futurenet.com

CIRCULATION AND LICENSING
Trade Marketing Manager: Jonathan Beeson
jonathan.beeson@futurenet.com
International Export Account Manager: Michael Peacock
+44(0)1225 732316, michael.peacock@futurenet.com
Licensing And Syndication Director: Regina Erak
regina.erak@futurenet.com
Head of Circulation: James Whitaker
james.whitaker@futurenet.com

PRINT AND PRODUCTION
Production Controller: Keely Miller
keely.miller@futurenet.com
Paper Controller: Lorraine Rees
lorraine.rees@futurenet.com
Advertising Production Coordinator: Alaina Henderson
alaina.henderson@futurenet.com

THE SENIOR PARTNERS
Creative Director: Bob Abbott
Editorial Director: Jim Douglas
Head of Entertainment Group: Clair Porteous

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Phone our UK hotline on: 0870 837 4722
Subscribe online at: www.comicheroesmagazine.com

NEXT COMIC HEROES ON SALE 20 February 2013

MAGAZINE PRINTED IN THE UK BY William Gibbons
on behalf of Future
DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK BY Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT Tel 020 7429 4000
OVERSEAS DISTRIBUTION BY Future Publishing Ltd, Bath
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244

Brought to you by: the power of popular poetry, as slipped into any story he could by a slumming Roy Thomas. We’ve always especially loved the Hulk/high culture juxtaposition, as in (to name just one!) the 1971 tale ‘They Shoot Hulks, Don’t They?’, inspired, Thomas claimed in the credit box, ‘by the book *Radical Chic* by Tom Wolfe’. Whatever: it provided the perfect moody downtime before the destruction begins…

Future produces high-quality multimedia products which reach our audiences online, on mobile and in print. Future attracts over 50 millions consumers to its brands every month across five core sectors: Technology, Entertainment, Music, Creative and Sports & Auto. We export and license our publications.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive Mark Wood
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Chief financial officer Graham Harding
Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

© Future Publishing Limited 2012. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission, in whole or in part, in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage. And if you bothered reading that, you’re probably now angrier than Banner confronted by Mr McGee.

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C007184

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

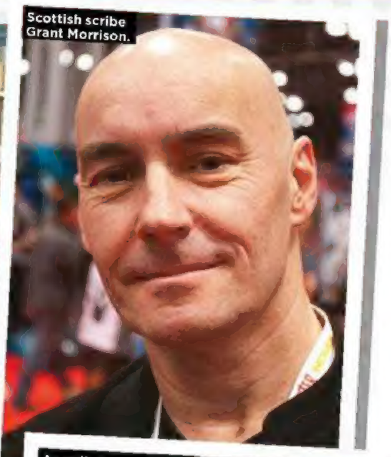
Facebook.com/ComicHeroes

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). Astounding!

“There’s room for only one living, green-skinned powerhouse here on Earth…”

RETURNS THIS SUNDAY 9P amc
IDW

We can see at least three Batmans.



Scottish scribe Grant Morrison.

An evil death stare to make Loki proud.

King Of New York

It's the plucky upstart with designs on its West Coast rival. **Joel Meadows** reports from New York Comic Con

It's hard to believe, considering the scale of this year's event, that prior to 2006 the Big Apple didn't even host a major comics show, but in the past six years Reed's New York Comic Con has just got better and better. And whereas San Diego, its bigger West Coast cousin, can sometimes feel like it's been taken over by stars of film and TV, New York is still very much about the comics.

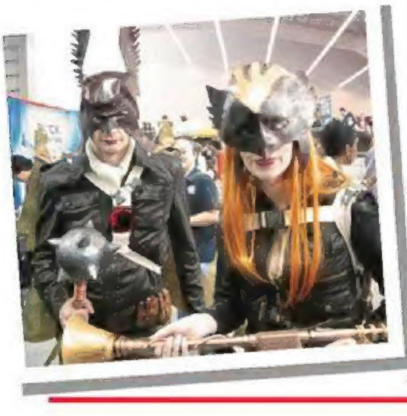
DC's massive booth featured the likes of Jim Lee, current superstar writer Scott Snyder, Bill Willingham, JG Jones, Frazer Irving and David Finch. The main floor also had a sizeable Dark Horse booth with creators including Gerard Way, Mike Mignola, Brian Wood and Lance Henriksen signing throughout. The big draw on the Image stand was *The Walking Dead* creator Robert Kirkman, joined by familiar faces from the TV show.

The rest of the main floor was populated by the likes of Archaia, Comixology and Legendary, which announced a Grant Morrison-penned miniseries and a graphic novel based on Guillermo Del Toro's new movie *Pacific Rim*. Both Morrison and Del Toro were on hand to answer questions.

The list of creators on Artists' Alley read like an industry who's who: Ivan Reis, Eduardo Risso, Alex Maleev, Ben Templesmith, Bill Sienkiewicz, Cully Hamner, David Lloyd, Erik Larsen, Joshua Middleton, to name but a few.

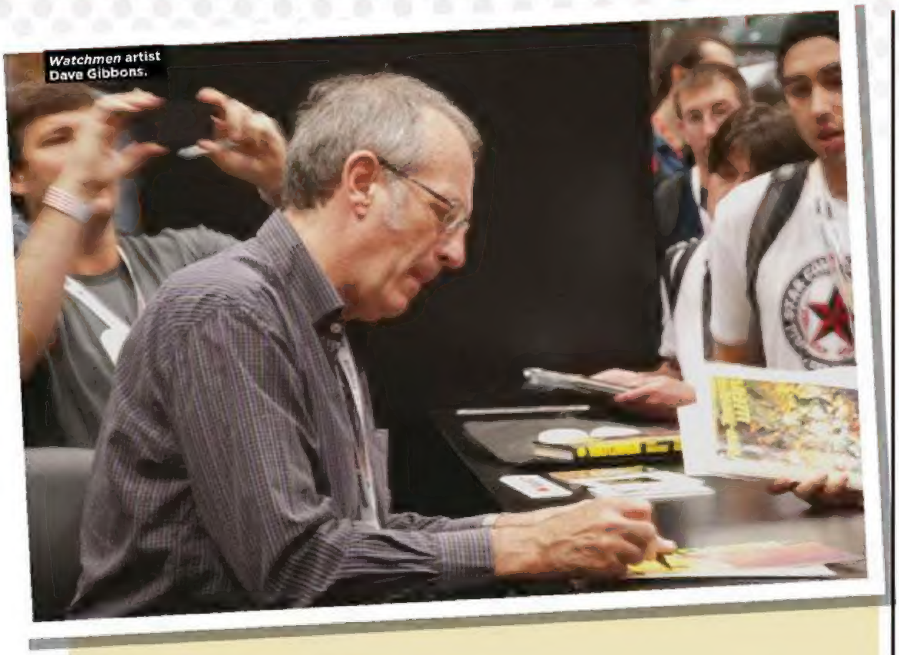
Numbers for this year are estimated at about 117,000 and with 2013 promising even more comic movies – *Captain America 2, Man Of Steel, Thor 2* – it's likely to keep on growing. CH

“In the past six years Reed's Comic Con has got better and better”



Beware his chilling freeze gun.

It's a great Green Arrow double act!



Watchmen artist Dave Gibbons.

Show Reels

The big names at NYCC all had exciting projects to shout about...

LEGENDARY

Set up by the film company of the same name and headed by ex-DC, Dark Horse and Oni man Bob Schreck, Legendary announced a couple of major coups. Firstly, *Batman* scribe Grant Morrison will be writing *Annihilator*, a new six-part creator-owned miniseries. It tells the story of Ray Spass, a tentpole screenwriter on the ropes, uninspired, on a deadline for a sci-fi movie, and dealing with a brain tumour. The artist is yet to be revealed.

Legendary will also be publishing a graphic novel to tie in with Guillermo Del Toro's eagerly awaited alien blockbuster *Pacific Rim*, out July 2013; it's written by Travis Beacham, who wrote the initial draft for the film.

VERTIGO

Scott Snyder's *American Vampire* is taking a break next year and it's the end of the road for Jeff Lemire's *Sweet Tooth*, but during the break Snyder will be starting work on *The Wake* with artist Sean Murphy. The 12-issue series is described as 'a horror sci-fi story with post-apocalyptic elements'.

Lemire won't be taking a break either. He'll be writing and painting a new 10-issue series called *Trillium: The Last Love Story Ever Told*. As the name suggests, it's a sprawling time-leaping romance between a female botanist employed in deep space 1,000 years in the future, and a WW1 vet working in the Amazon.

IMAGE

Image announced a raft of new titles from creators more often associated with Marvel or DC: *Thor* writer Matt Fraction is doing books with Chip Zdarsky and Howard Chaykin called *Sex Criminals* and *Satellite Sam*; Kieron (*X-Men*) Gillen and Ryan (*Lucifer*) Kelly are doing a historical fiction book set in ancient Greece; Andy Diggle and Jock are re-teaming for a Hitchcockian thriller; Jim McCann and Janet K Lee (*Return Of The Dapper Men*) are doing a sci-fi caper; and Jonathan Hickman and Nick Dragotta are working on *Four Horsemen Vs The President*.

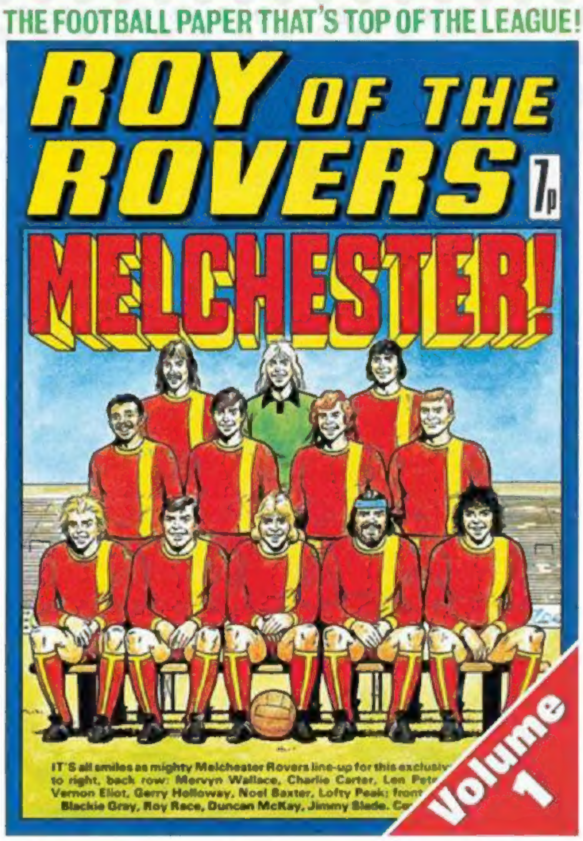
DC

In the main DC line, and to tie in with the character's 75th anniversary, co-publisher Jim Lee will be teaming up with Scott Snyder for *Superman: Man Of Steel*.

MARVEL

Secret Avengers will relaunch in February with Nick Spencer and Luke Ross taking creative charge. It will be a SHIELD-sponsored team and apparently the Avengers will be mind-wiped after every operation. It was also announced that Agent Coulson, played by Clark Gregg, will return in ABC's *SHIELD* TV series.

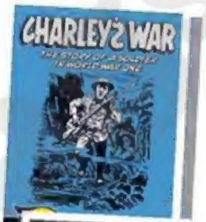
Amazing Spider-Man is being replaced by *Superior Spider-Man* – but Spider-Man won't be Peter Parker. Dan Slott, who's written Spidey for the past few years, will be on board on the new book, which launches in January.


THE FOOTBALL PAPER THAT'S TOP OF THE LEAGUE!
ROY OF THE ROVERS 7p
MELCHESTER!
IT'S all smiles as mighty Melchester Rovers line-up for this exclusiv
to right, back row: Mervyn Wallace, Charlie Carter, Len Pete
Vernon Eliot, Gerry Holloway, Noel Baxter, Lofty Peak; front
Blackie Gray, Roy Race, Duncan McKay, Jimmy Slade. Co
Volume 1

Roy Race's transfer price: £1.99!

Battle, *Roy Of The Rovers*, and more: the classics of youth, now available on iPad, and cheap...

Digital comics have been big news for some time, of course, but few offerings have got us quite as excited as the arrival of rarities from the IPC/Fleetway archives through Egmont's Classic Comics label.



JOHNNY RED
PART ONE

Welcome to the world of...
MISTY

Beginning last summer with four volumes of *Roy Of The Rovers* – a fifth was added recently – it now also includes selections from girls' mystery comic *Misty* (with its flawed heroines and horror-tinged stories) and the much-loved *Battle Picture Weekly*, including *Major Eazy*, *Rat Pack*, *Charley's War* and *Johnny Red*, the tale of an on-the-run RAF Hurricane pilot throwing in his lot with the Russians that's featured in this issue's *Giant-Size Sidekick*.

The list of creators involved, of course, is like a role-call of classic Brit-comic talent – including Pat Mills, John Wagner, Carlos Ezquerra and Joe Colquhoun – and the risk factor is small, requiring an iBooks Store investment of just £1.99.

www.egmont.co.uk

THE VIEW FROM A BOARD

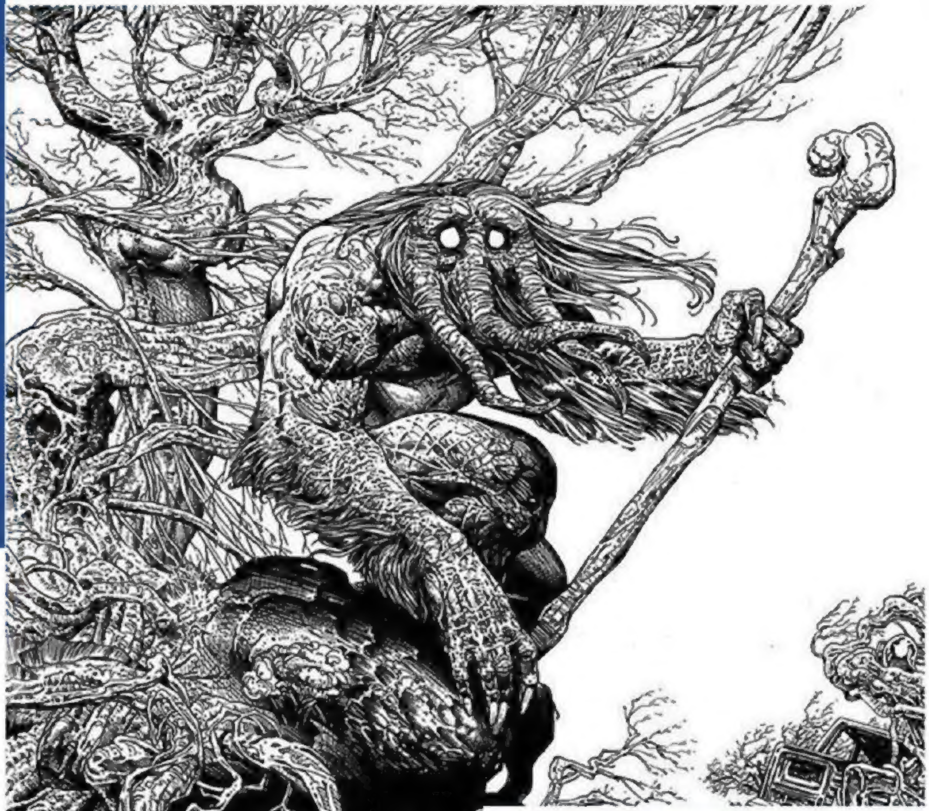
Mike Perkins on making monsters: they're not always big sellers at the major publishers, but creators relish them...

There are three essential components that immediately spring to mind whenever – oh, happy day! – I contemplate the opportunity to illustrate the many monsters of the big comic book universes: texture, mood and character.

Primarily, as any artist working in American comics will tell you, we're required to produce magnificently heroic tales featuring the young and beautiful – the perfectly formed and pleasantly groomed. These modern-day gods and goddesses are the lifeblood of the mainstream market, but what happens when we're allowed to delve into the murky depths of the underworld? Well, truthfully, we relish the opportunity. After all, the more potentially horrific the hero, the stronger – or at least moodier – the strip, or so it often seems.

Cast an admiring glance at some of the (deservedly tagged) classics of the horror genre in comics and it's almost impossible not to be impressed. Marvel's '70s *The Tomb Of Dracula*, for instance, took Gene Colan's already dramatic art and turned it into a flowing maelstrom of mood and atmosphere. The ambience of those strips – particularly the ones inked by Tom Palmer – are so thick with brooding mystery you can almost taste it. The extraordinary, ultra-detailed work of Steve Bissette and John Totleben during Alan Moore's classic run on DC's *Swamp Thing* has, similarly, never been beaten in terms of grittiness and texture.

And have you ever seen Liam Sharp's stunning and wonderful take on Man-Thing? (Honestly, that's not a euphemism; he had a run on Marvel's elephant-nosed muck monster in the late '90s.) Now, there's an artist who was obviously luxuriating in the opportunity to truly create a suitable environment, and generate bizarre attributes, for a classic monster.



Liam Sharpe's superb Man-Thing.

CREATURE FEATURES

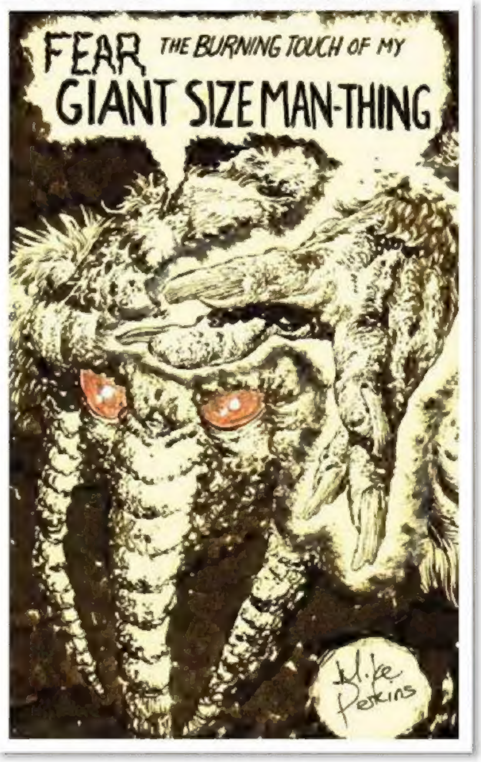
So why aren't monster strips more consistent bestsellers? One theory seems to be that they so readily lend themselves to the black-and-white format, and that monochrome comics rarely – *The Walking Dead* being a major exception, of course – sell all that well.

Certainly, working in mono seems to inspire the best from some artists – Esteban Maroto on *Satana*, José Ortiz on *The Thirteenth Floor*, Kevin O'Neill on *Nemesis The Warlock* – but it's surprising how often even those monster strips, originally produced for reproduction in colour, work, staggeringly, even better in black and white. (My *Tomb Of Dracula* collection resides in the cheap-but-amazing monochrome *Essentials* reprints, for instance, and as lovely as the recent hardback *Swamp Thing* reprints have been, they were surpassed in my mind over 20 years earlier by the black-and-white versions issued by Titan.)

Monster comics tend to flourish when the setting is dark and forbidding – and the tools used to bring those tales to life underscore and enhance those ominous overtones. They need to be a little bit scary, even off-putting.

Outside of the independent market – where horror-themed stories flourish – monsters and monstrous heroes seem doomed to forever sit on the sidelines as far as the mainstream publishers are concerned. Certainly, the mainstream opportunities that spawned the great '70s revival in the supernatural – *Dracula* and *Swamp Thing*, *Ghost Rider* and *Werewolf By Night* – seem to have long since passed us by.

For shame. I could personally guarantee that almost every artist out there would love to tackle a significant run on a horror comic, given half a chance, and I'm no exception. Just as most artists like drawing Batman, so Dracula – to name but one – is someone almost all of us would like to (ahem) sink our teeth into... **CH**



> **“ Monster comics tend to flourish when the setting is dark and forbidding ”**

Mike Perkins is still rocking it on ***Astonishing X-Men.***

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

MOTHER'S BASEMENT

Christmas is coming – and fast. But there's still time to find the perfect gift for the fan in your life. Mother's Basement supply a huge range of gifts, big and small. We've picked out twelve of the best from their sci-fi selection.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... JUSTICE LEAGUE KOREJANAI FIGURES

Superman! Batman! Wonder Woman! Green Lantern! The Flash! The five iconic heroes who make up the "classic" Justice League line up. And now you can collect them all as these super-cute little Korejanai figures. We love Superman's kiss curl, and Wonder Woman's heavy eye make-up. Our favourite, though, is Batman who – despite being all square and little – still manages to give off grumpy, don't-mess-with-me vibes.

£5.99 EACH

ON THE SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... A WALKING DEAD MICHONNE ACTION FIGURE

Yep, it's everyone's favourite zombie-slaying badass in highly-articulated plastic form. This ace figure comes with Michonne's signature katana – ideal for lopping the limbs off newly undead loved ones – as well as a drill, hammer, pliers and a spoon. Yes, that's right, you can pretend that Michonne is fitting some shelves and having a cuppa – or maybe extracting bloody revenge on those that have wronged her. It's up to you, really.

£12.99

ON THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... MARVEL SELECT ACTION FIGURES

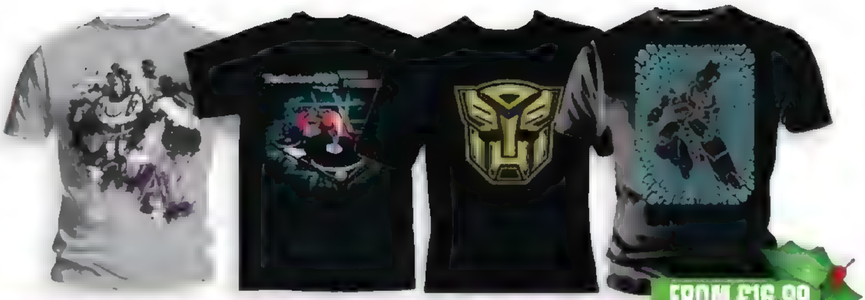
Hulk smash! The green meanie was one of the most talked about characters this year after his turn in *The Avengers* (we're still laughing at the "puny god" scene). And now you can have your very own irradiated mutant to love forever. Not only that, but you can pit him against enemies like the Red Skull, Dr Doom or a Chitauri – or even against other heroes like Hawkeye and the Thing. There's loads to choose from in this range of brilliantly detailed 7-inch figures.

FROM £12.50

SEE ALL OF THESE PRODUCTS AND MUCH MORE AT WWW.MOTHERSBASEMENT.CO.UK!

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... A TRANSFORMERS T-SHIRT

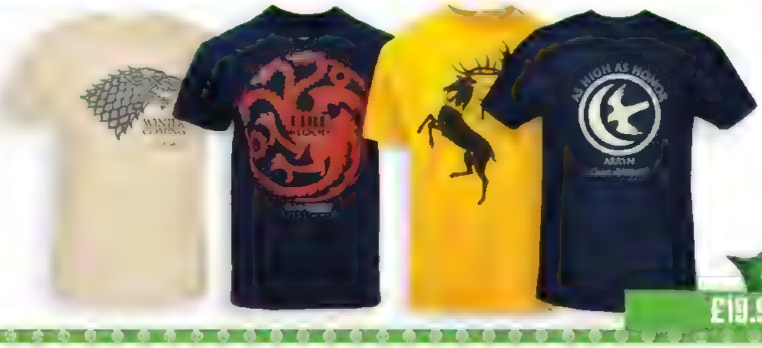
Choose which side you're on, with these t-shirts featuring the two iconic Transformers emblems. Are you generally a good sort? Do you dream about hanging out with Optimus Prime or racing in Bumblebee? Well, you should probably pick the Autobot shirt. Prefer crime and carnage? Guns and giant '80s tape decks more your thing? The Decepticon shirt it is then. Just don't be surprised if people start thinking you're a tad on the evil side.



FROM £16.99

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... A GAME OF THRONES HOUSE CREST T-SHIRT

Can you remember who everyone is related to in *Game Of Thrones*? No, us neither. It's a good thing the DVDs come with a family tree. Anyway this range of t-shirts lets you show where your allegiances lie in Westeros, by wearing the crest of your favourite house proudly on your chest. You can choose from the mighty fine likes of Greyjoy, Lannister, Targareyen, Tully, Barratheon, Arryn or Stark. Yay, Stark! Oh, Eddard, we still weep for you.



£19.99

ON THE SIXTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... MARTY McFLY'S HAT

Rock that 2015 style, two years early. This is a perfect replica of Marty's baseball cap from *Back To The Future Part II*. Made from ultra-reflective fabrics that constantly shift with colour in the light, it's bound to attract attention and covetous glances from those in the know. You don't even need a time-travelling Delorian to stay ahead of the curve. Now if only someone would flipping hurry up and make an actual working hoverboard.

£24.99

ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... A STAR TREK MEDICAL TRICORDER

Get this nifty Tricorder and you are now ready to make like Leonard "Bones" McCoy and start saving lives around the galaxy. It's got accurate blinking lights, a moving scanner and various opening panels. And if you want to hear the legendary DeForest Kelley's tones once more, it says seven phrases including everyone's favourite, "I'm a doctor, not a bricklayer!" Now you just need to perfect your best furrowed brow and start saying "Jim!" like a motorbike starting up.

£49.99

ON THE EIGHTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... A LIFESIZE TALKING TED BEAR

As anyone who's seen the movie will tell you, Ted may look like a sweetie, but he's actually a foul-mouthed letch. Which is why we love him so! The version on release in the UK is only a PG version with 12 funny but "safe" phrases. But fear not, Mother's Basement is one of the only retailers in Europe to stock the specially imported R-Rated adult version, which says an additional seven sweary phrases, including the Thunder Song. Altogether now: "F*ck you thunder, you can suck my dick!"

£69.99

SEE ALL OF THESE PRODUCTS AND MUCH MORE AT WWW.MOTHERSBASEMENT.CO.UK!

MOTHER'S BASEMENT

£69.99

ON THE NINTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... A BOBA FETT FULL-FACE HOODIE

Winter is coming... so make sure you wrap up warm inside everyone's favourite Mandalorian bounty hunter. This hoodie from Mad Engine features the coolest cat in the *Star Wars* universe, and zips up all the way to the top, covering your whole head with his helmet. You can also get Vader, Stormtrooper and R2-D2 designs... but come on. You're gonna choose Fett, right?

£109.99

ON THE TENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... CHEWBACCA'S BAG

Because nobody knows style like a Wookie! This lovely 15-inch x 10-inch faux-leather messenger bag perfectly recreates the bag Chewie used in the *Star Wars* series. What did he keep in there? We don't know, although we'd make a guess at hair wax and hand grenades. But you can keep whatever you like in it! The Bandolier shoulder strap is made from durable seat-belt material, so it's guaranteed to last. Go on, rock that Kashyyyk fashion!

£139.99

ON THE ELEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... AN IRON MAN ROCKMASTER GUITAR

Tony Stark loves Black Sabbath, so it's only fitting that he gets his own axe to wield in the service of rock. This full-size guitar from Peavey features the unmistakeable likeness of ol' Shell Head, and has a quality maple neck and rosewood fretboard. You can also choose Thor, Deadpool, Spider-Man and Hulk designs. Imagine Hulk trying to fingerpick his way through "Stairway To Heaven" or Thor getting to grips with "Smoke On The Water"...

FROM £149.99

ON THE TWELFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME... INCREDIBLE HOT TOYS FIGURES

These stunningly lifelike, sixth scale figures are something else! There's a huge range, but our favourite is the one based on Heath Ledger's Joker – just the thing for freaking out cats, kids and passing vigilante crimefighters. Hiddlestoners can rejoice too – there's a fantastic Loki figure with removable mask so you can stare at those frightening cheekbones to your heart's content. Just hope that no one of the Hulk's build comes along and throws you around like a rag doll.

SEE ALL OF THESE PRODUCTS AND MUCH MORE AT WWW.MOTHERSBASEMENT.CO.UK!

SHAPERS OF WORLDS

Out of his father's shadow

Andy Kubert

Among the most reliably excellent of modern superhero artists, Kubert brings a perfect mix of modern flash and classical craft to everything he does.

By Joel Meadows

Comics have a number of creative dynasties – Los Bros Hernandez spring to mind, or the John Romitas, Sr and Jr – but few can match the Kuberts: father Joe, who sadly died in the summer, was one of the industry's true greats, and sons Adam and Andy are both at the top of their game and among the biggest box office draws in modern mainstream comics. Both have worked extensively for the two big US publishers – notably on X-Men titles – and taught at The Kubert School, the comic art facility their father founded. Andy's career started with the likes of *Batman Vs Predator*, *Doc Savage* and *Adam Strange* at DC Comics. He then spent two decades at Marvel – including drawing the much-discussed Wolverine story, *Origin* – before a return to DC, where he is on an exclusive contract.

The recent years have been big ones for Kubert, drawing DC's major *Flashpoint* crossover in 2011, significant portions of Grant Morrison's epic *Batman* run, and pencilling *Before Watchmen: Nite Owl*, with inks on the early issues from his dad, Kubert senior's last professional work in a career that spanned eight decades. In recent months Andy and Adam have taken over running The Kubert School.

Comic Heroes: Though largely well-received, *Before Watchmen* has not been without its controversies. What was it that first attracted you to the project?
Andy Kubert: The appeal was because it was *Watchmen*! And, for me, it was also because Nite Owl was a lot like Batman. But yes, it was harrowing at the same time, because I knew I was stepping into a lion's den with it. I simply had to get that out of my head and admit to myself that it was something I wanted to do. I liked the direction it was all taking.

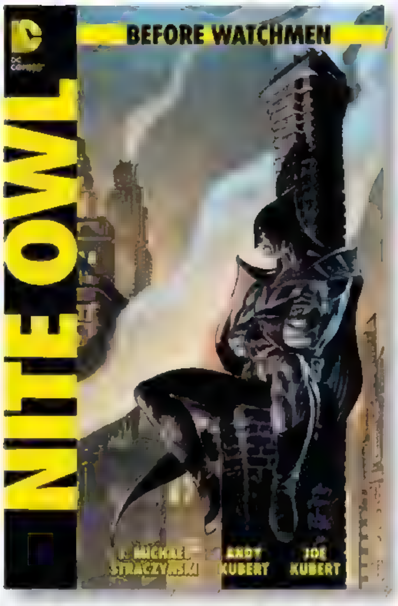
Image © Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons

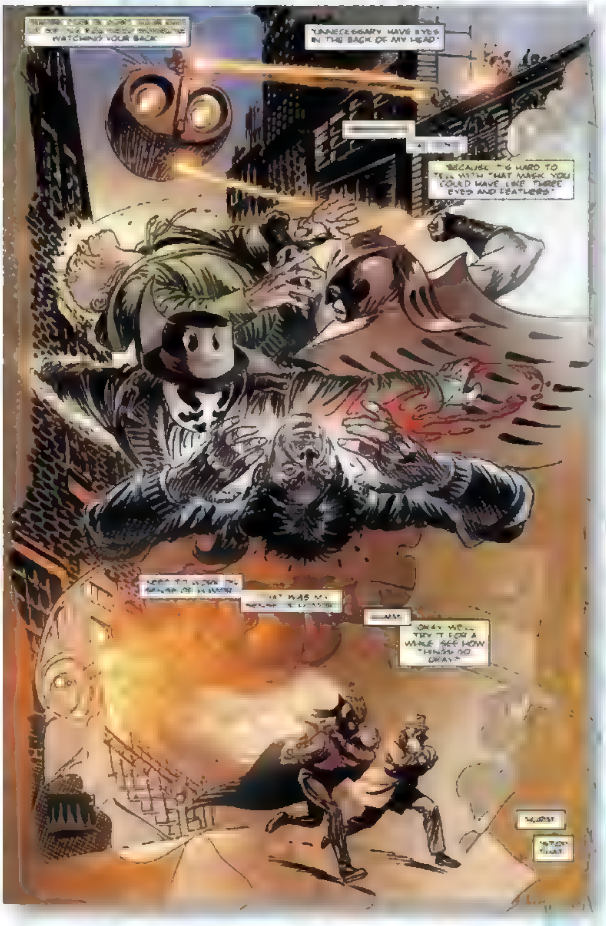
BORN US
HIGH BATMAN
NOW NITE OWL
MORE www.kubertschool.edu

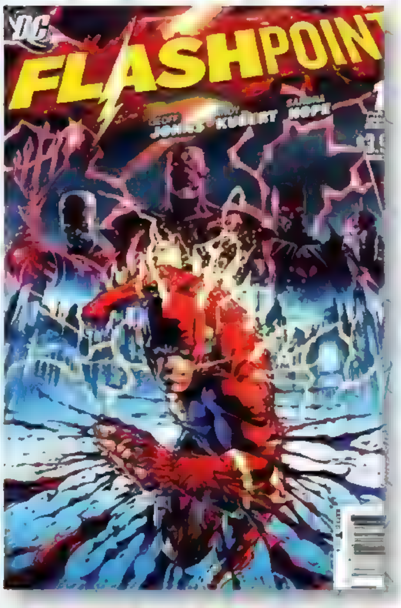
CH: DC obviously had to find someone to replace your father on *Nite Owl*. Bill Sienkiewicz seems an inspired choice, if not an obvious one...?
AK: I was looking for somebody who would take the same approach as my father, bringing a lot of their own thing to it. And I'd worked with Bill in the early '90s on *X-Men*, so he was a natural choice. When we asked him, he said that he'd absolutely love to do it, and I'm so glad he did.

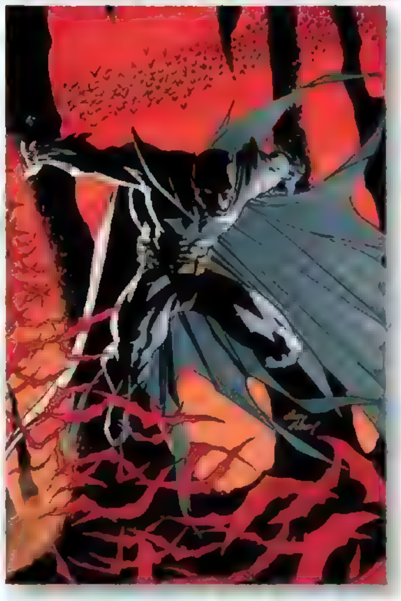
CH: As the son of a very well-known comic artist, your father will always cast a long shadow. How hard was it to find your own voice and style?
AK: Whoever you are, at the beginning of your career you're influenced by a lot of people. You can see a lot of my dad, especially when I was doing *Sgt Rock*, and even when I was on *Adam Strange*. I think you can also see a lot of Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. Later on, you get people like Jim Lee in there too, but you eventually branch off into your own style.

CH: Obviously, this summer – and your father's death – must have been a very difficult time for you...
AK: When my father passed away, it didn't hit home how much of an influence he'd had until we got all the messages of









condolence, all the emails and the phone calls. Also, all the people you don't know who come up to you and tell you just how much the school, and my father's work in general, affected their lives. It was really something.

CH: You were at Marvel for a long time; what persuaded you to return to DC?
AK: I loved working at Marvel. I was there from 1989 until 2006 – they were great people, and I got treated well, but I'd pretty much touched every character there that I wanted to do. So, as an artist, I wanted to push myself – I wanted to get out and spread my wings, and Batman, in particular, was someone I always wanted to draw. Early in my career I was given *Batman vs Predator*, and I loved drawing that. I'm having a great time because it's a whole other sandbox to play in. You approach every character differently, and once I got into Batman and Superman and the *Flashpoint* stuff at DC it all felt very different to Marvel. And as a creator, you want to keep yourself excited. To draw something over and over for years can get boring.

CH: How is it with Adam? Any sibling rivalry going on there?
AK: I'd say yes, but that rivalry helps both of us, it really does. I think it's one of the reasons we're doing what we are today, and we've both hopefully elevated our artwork through comparing our work and careers. It's brought out the best in both of us.

CH: You actually started pretty late in life as a comic artist…
AK: I never set out wanting to be a comic artist. In fact, I never set out wanting to be an artist of any sort! I didn't even begin drawing until I was 19. But then I started going through The Kubert School, initially just for a year while my mom worked in the office. I was going to help her with admin but I got into the drawing instead! CH

Following *Before Watchmen: Nite Owl*, Andy will return to Batman for a new project.

> **“I loved Marvel, but I'd pretty much touched every character I wanted to do”**

Above: Kubert, pictured above left with his dad, Joe, was at Marvel for around 17 years – illustrating *Origin*, among many, many others – before returning to DC, where he's been working on *Nite Owl*, *Flashpoint*, and Batman projects.

SHAPERS OF WORLDS

Epic adventures

Brian K Vaughan

One of the most inventive, consistently human writers in comics returns after a working holiday in TV-land, with perhaps his most ambitious series yet...

By Stephen Jewell

Don't call it a comeback! After taking a sabbatical from the medium following the conclusion of his cult Wildstorm series *Ex Machina* in 2010 – a crazy, fascinating period during which he worked as a staff writer on ultra-twisty TV plane crash sensation *Lost*, as well as other film and TV projects – Brian K Vaughan, one of our very best writers, has returned to comic books with a vengeance.

His current project, *Saga*, is a gloriously fantastical space opera about two extraterrestrial lovers. The LA-based author is teamed with Canadian artist Fiona Staples – who you may remember from Wildstorm series *North 40* – and *Saga* has proved to be a resurgent Image Comics' biggest hit of the year, with February's #1 selling more than 70,000 copies to date.

"Truthfully, I have to say I'm stunned," Vaughan admits, when *Comic Heroes* met him backstage at New York Comic Con. "I thought that I might have a bit of capital to spend in this world, and with that maybe I can roll the dice on something that's just for me and Fiona. *Saga* is very personal and very weird. It has robots having sex! I thought that we could very realistically be cancelled after six issues, as we have two non-white leads in a non-superhero book. In fact, in the current marketplace, I never dreamed that it would do as well as it has!"

Comic Heroes: You refer to the main characters, Alana and Marko, as being of non-white ethnicity – but they're actually *aliens*, and of different species to boot. How closely is the book about race issues?

Brian K Vaughan: Whether it's *The Lord Of The Rings* or *Star Wars*, so often the default when you're visiting an alien planet, or a fantasy landscape, is white. I give a lot of credit to Fiona, because when we were first talking about the characters, my request was, 'Please, no redheads, because I feel like there's been a glut of them lately'. Her response was, 'Why do they have to be white at all?' She was absolutely right, especially for the story that we're telling. Our characters are soldiers from different worlds, and it makes much more sense to have a bit of diversity.

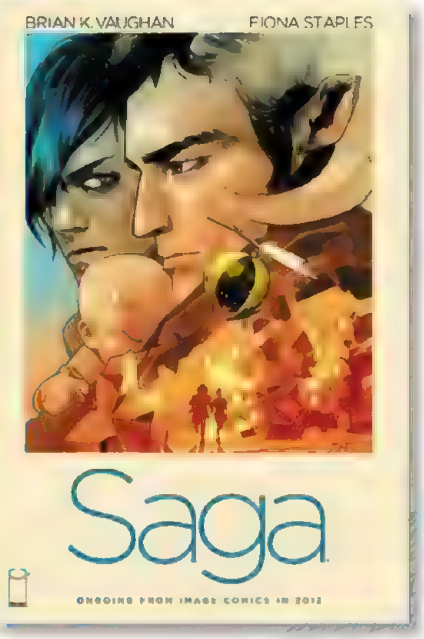
Image © Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons

BORN US

HIGH Y: THE LAST MAN

NOW SAGA

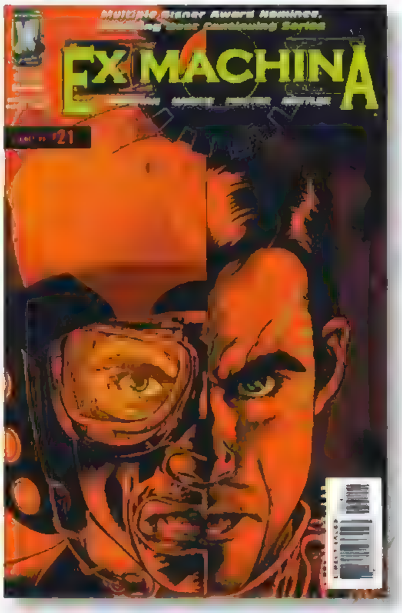
MORE imagecomics.com



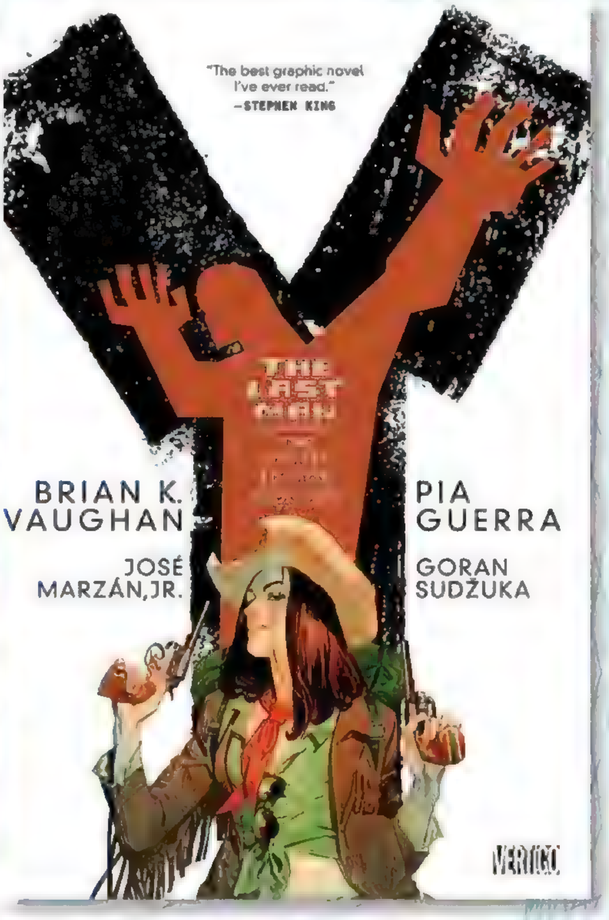
CH: *Saga* has been described as *Game Of Thrones* meets *Star Wars*. Fair call?

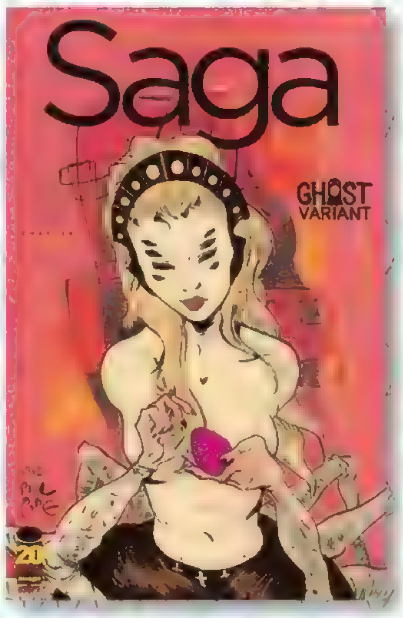
BKV: I think everyone from my generation has been highly influenced by *Star Wars* – and just as George Lucas took elements from the *Flash Gordon* serials that he loved as a child, I was similarly inspired by his work. But I didn't want to be beholden to it and, indeed, in some ways *Saga* is a reaction against it.

This isn't a story about what books and films I grew up loving, it's a story about my kids, which has been filtered through my pop culture interests. But hopefully it's a book you'll enjoy even if you don't have children, because it's not really about babies at all. At its heart it's about creating – whether that's artwork or other human beings – in a world that rejects anything that's new.


Multiple Eisner Award Nominee, ... Continuing Series
EX MACHINA
#21

WELCOME TO SEXTILLION!





CH: And it's not just about Alana and Marko starting a family either, as television-headed assassin Prince Robot IV's wife also gets pregnant…
BKV: Indeed! That was not just gratuitous robot sex in the first issue; there was a purpose to all that madness!

CH: Alana and Marko bring to mind Romeo and Juliet, if they'd grown up and had kids instead of dying…
BKV: They're like classic archetypal characters, but at the same time those two were profoundly stupid teenagers who did an incredibly dumb thing. I'd had my fill of doing dumb twenty-somethings in *Y: The Last Man*, which was a story about boys in their twenties becoming men. So I thought, what if they were in their thirties, when people are more settled and a little bit wiser to the ways of the world? Instead of killing themselves like idiots, they run away together and have lots of delightful sex. There are consequences, of course, and that's where the story begins.

CH: *Y: The Last Man* was set in a post-apocalyptic America, while *Ex Machina* centred on a former superhero who becomes Mayor of New York. As *Saga* takes place across the entire universe, do you look at it as the largest canvas you've ever explored?
BKV: I was always very jealous of Neil Gaiman: *Sandman* was a great book that could be whatever he wanted it to be from month to month. If he tired of doing a horror book, he could suddenly do a romance or a Shakespearian drama.

Similarly, I hope that every few issues of *Saga* will feel like a total reinvention – and that each planet will feel completely separate from the one before it. So, expect the unexpected.

CH: The first arc ended in #6, with not just the birth of Alana and Marko's baby, Hazel, but also the surprise arrival of her parents…
BKV: The theme of the second volume, which starts with #7, will be in-laws, and the drama that happens when the grandparents come into the story. I have to be very clear that this is not me complaining about my own in-laws, who are beautiful people that I love!

CH: How many issues can we expect?
BKV: I know exactly how the series ends, but I don't know how long it will take to get there. I hope it will be a long time, and that people will stick with us, because I want this to be the biggest, best thing that I've ever worked on. I want to do a sci-fi *War And Peace* – an epic story of one family, perhaps over generations. It's primarily Hazel's story so there's still a long way to go. CH

***Saga* is currently ongoing from Image; the first six-issue story arc is available as a graphic novel.**

> **"It wasn't just gratuitous robot sex – there was a purpose to that madness"**

Above: Vaughan is best known for dystopian sci-fi comic series *Y: The Last Man*, and *Ex Machina*, the tale of the world's first superhero Mitchell Hundred, but he's hoping *Saga* will be his biggest book yet.

Reluctant storyteller

Cully Hamner

From helping redesign the DC pantheon for the New 52 to co-creating hard-boiled spy adventures, Cully Hamner has sure impacted on modern comics.

By Joel Meadows

Cully Hamner is an artist who has built up quite a following over the past two decades, thanks to his strong, graphic linework and striking storytelling. He began his career on *Green Lantern: Mosaic* in the early '90s, but has since gone on to draw everything from *Daredevil* to *The Question*, *Uncanny X-Men* to Warren Ellis project *Red*, much modified a few years back to make for a Bruce Willis/Helen Mirren actioner. He's an artist who always seems to be in demand.

Comic Heroes: You've done superheroes, you've done regular action projects. Which do you like best?
Cully Hamner: I guess I enjoy the variety. The problem is, I get antsy – and although I do like substantial projects, I'm just not a guy who stays on a title for, say, two years. Probably the longest run that I've had on anything was on *The Question* [in *Detective Comics*], and that was 12 issues.

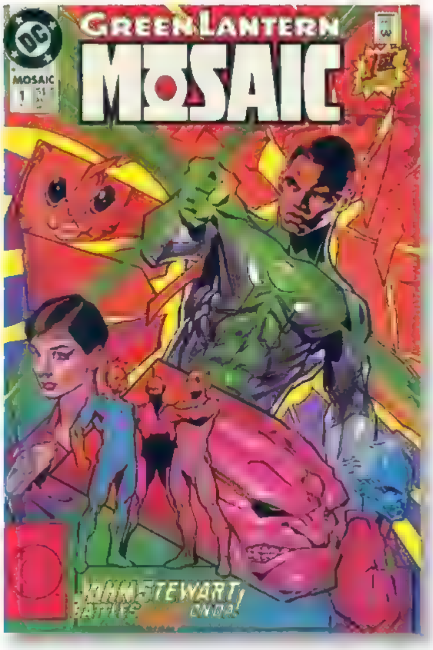
CH: But you're not against major projects with big name characters, are you?
CH: No, I just finished the new *Action Comics Annual*, written by Sholly Fisch. It was 32 pages long and it was great. I don't mean this in any kind of derogatory way, but it was a boiler plate Superman story. Very classic: you've got Superman, Lois, Jimmy Olsen, Kryptonite and Lex Luthor. It was just a lot of fun to do. And if it weren't for the New 52 suit he's wearing, it could have come from any era.

CH: Most recently, though, people have seen your work on James Robinson's *Starman* spin-off series, *The Shade*. You first worked with him years ago, on Malibu's *Firearm* series, of course.
CH: Yeah, and it's funny, because *Starman* is something I almost did years ago. Robinson actually showed me the first issue script and asked if I'd be interested. In fact, he showed me two or three different things at the same time and, idiot that I was, I told him: 'I'll take *Firearm*.'

Image © Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons

BORN US
HIGH RED
NOW NATIONAL COMICS
MORE cully-hamner.blogspot.co.uk

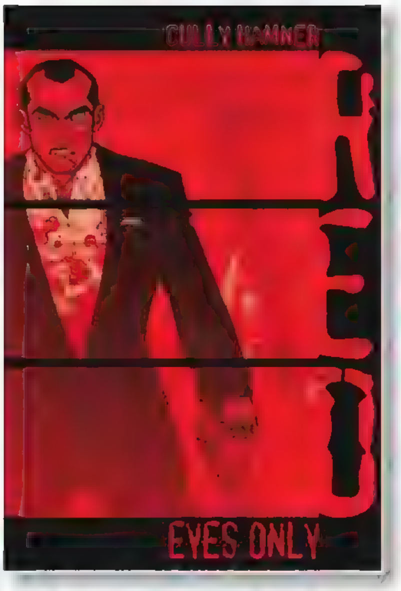
> **"To evolve as a storyteller, I need to tell my own stories"**

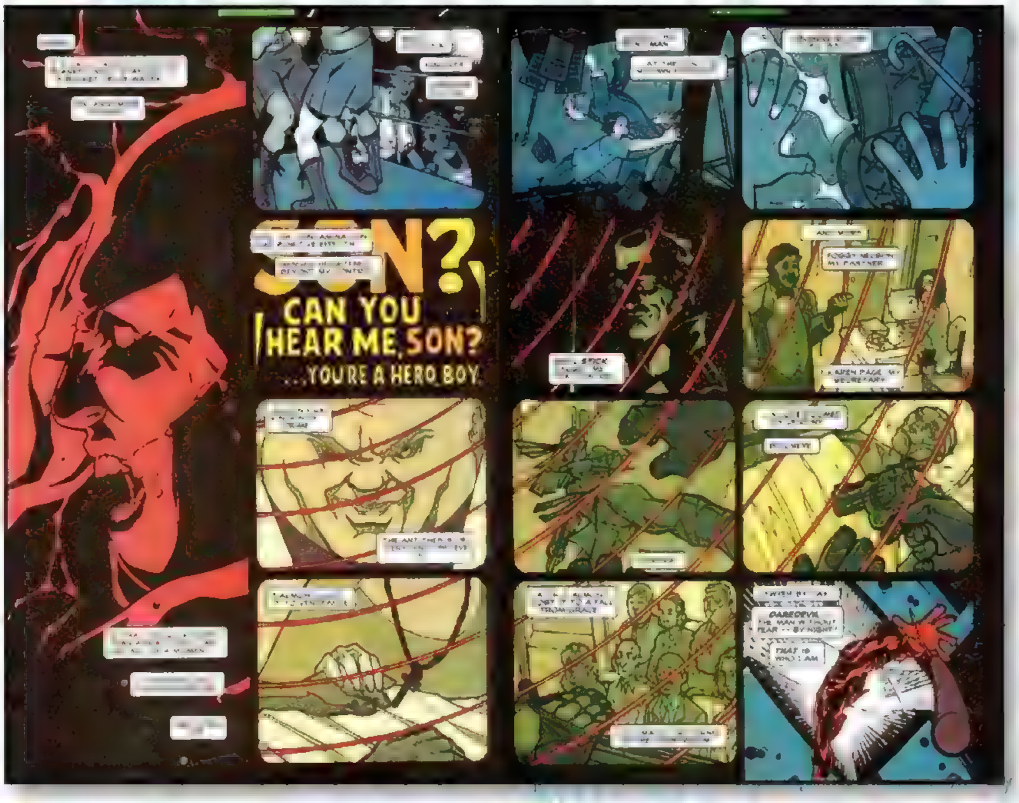


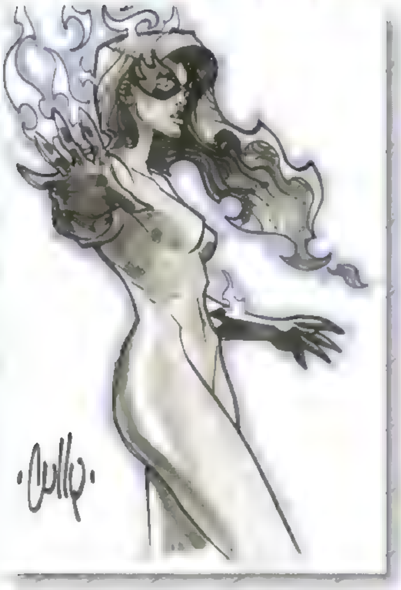
CH: Annoying, eh?
CH: Yeah, but then Tony Harris got on *Starman* as artist and, to be honest, I wouldn't have been able to do what Tony did with the book. But it was good to work with James again, after all this time, and we just fell right into the way we do things.

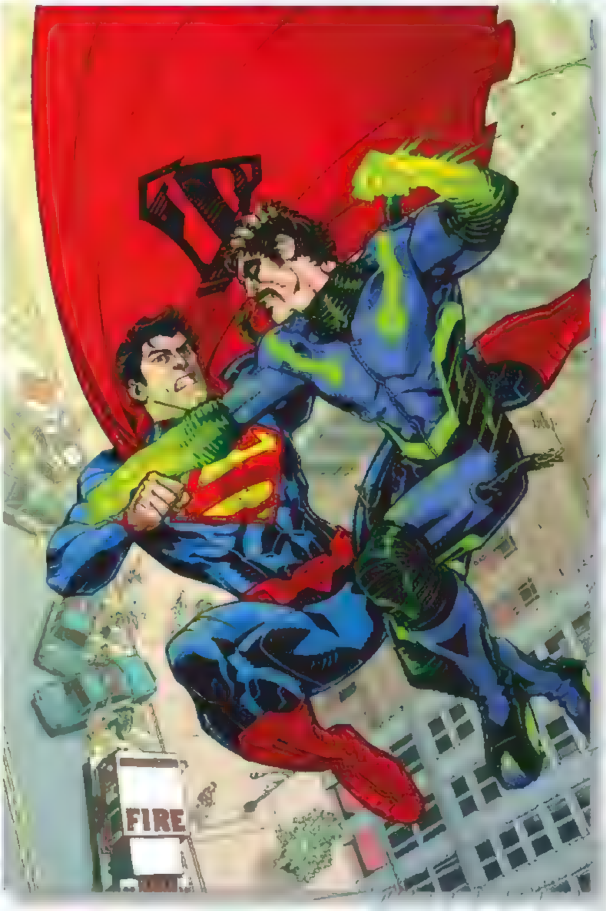
CH: This year also saw you draw one of DC's *National Comics* one-shots, *Eternity*, written by Jeff (*Sweet Tooth*, *Animal Man*) Lemire. It was a new take on the old Quality/DC Kid Eternity character...
CH: Oh, but the main reason I wanted to do it was I wanted to work with Jeff Lemire; he and I had been looking for something to do for a while. It was a lot of fun and we're going to do more things together.

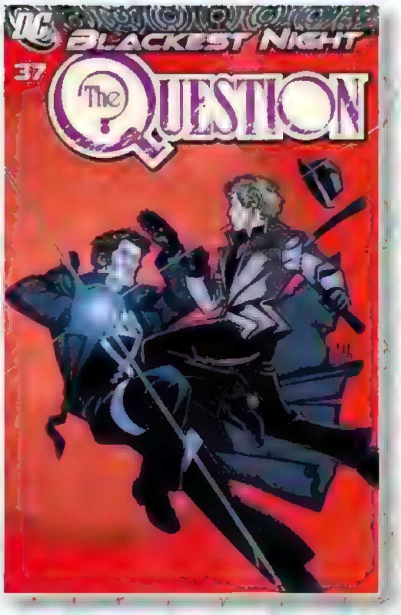
CH: As part of Gaijin Studios in Atlanta, home, over the years, to the likes of Brian Stelfreeze, Tony Harris, Adam Hughes and Dave Johnson, you had an unusual experience for an artist: working in a sort of office atmosphere...
CH: Yeah, I worked at home for about a year and I hated it, so I went out and rented an office. Laura Martin, who used to be in the studio with me, then rented the one next door, and there's another artist, by the name of Jeremy Dale, who's in the office across the hall. So it's almost like a de facto

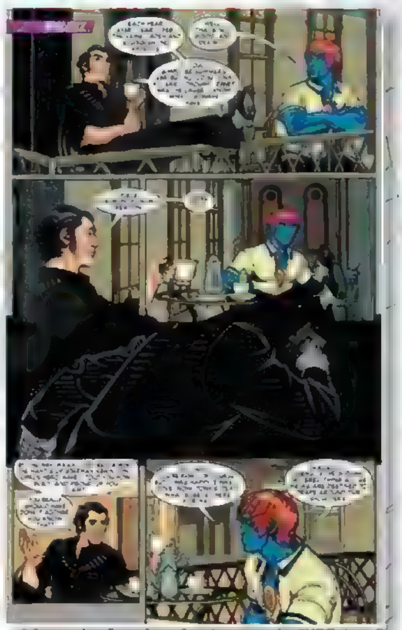



SON?
CAN YOU HEAR ME, SON?
...YOU'RE A HERO BOY.









studio – or, at least, you get a little bit of that. I like to have somebody to go to lunch with – and I like to get up, take a shower and go to work, as opposed to walking in my underwear to my office.

CH: For many people your biggest project will be *Red*, the Warren Ellis Wildstorm spy series which did well enough in its later film incarnation to warrant a sequel...

CH: Oh yeah, they're doing *Red 2* right now. I will probably try and see if I can visit the set at some point. I know what they're doing, but I don't know if I can really talk about it. You won't be surprised to hear, however, that it's very much in the same vein, and same spirit, as the first one.

CH: Occasionally you've dipped your toes into writing too; and aren't you meant to be writing and drawing a digital *Legends Of The Dark Knight* story sometime soon...?

CH: Yeah; I wrote the *Red* comic prequel, *Red: Eyes Only*, that came out right about the same time as the movie did and, sure, I've written a few other things here and there. I'm trying to drag myself into doing it, but it's a hard job. There's much more stage fright than when I work as an artist, because I'm just not as used to it. But the other end of that is that I feel like I'm a storyteller – and, in order to evolve as a storyteller, I need to tell my own stories. I certainly like working with writers, but it's something I want to try more, and it's something I feel like I *should* try more too.

Cully Hamner's *Action Comics Annual* is available now.

Above: Hamner is probably best known for *Red*, but he's also brought his distinctive style to *Daredevil* and *Blackest Night*.

New woman

Cliff Chiang

A different, more sophisticated style – influenced by classic movie posters and magazine illustration – is making its mark. Darwyn Cooke is probably its most famous practitioner, but Cliff Chiang is coming up fast on the outside...

By Joel Meadows

Cliff Chiang is an unusual comic book artist: went to Harvard, specialises in female characters, never started out as an illustrator. Though he's been a professional artist for more than a decade now, his comics career, unusually, began on the other side of the fence, in editorial. First, he was at Disney, then at DC's mature readers imprint, Vertigo.

It was at DC that he first got noticed as an artist, thanks to a side gig drawing a back-up in *Detective Comics*, *Josie Mac*, about a minor Gotham City cop. Since then he's gone on to work on everything from superheroes to espionage comics, with major gigs including *Beware The Creeper* (an arty Vertigo take on the classic Steve Ditko character, now reinvented as female) and *Green Arrow and Black Canary*, a take on DC's Robin Hood that put his female partner front and centre. Currently, he's alternating on art duties with Tony Akins on DC's New 52 *Wonder Woman* title, as written by Brian Azzarello...

Comic Heroes: So, what's it like looking back at your very first stuff now...?

Cliff Chiang: The reality is that comics are a very competitive field, and when I first starting drawing I knew my stuff wasn't quite up to snuff. I *did* want to work in comics in some capacity or another, though, and as an artist I knew work wasn't guaranteed, so I followed up my interest in the editorial side and started working as an assistant editor.

CH: And was that a useful experience?

CC: Oh, very. I came out of school and got a job in editorial. At first I worked for Heidi MacDonald for *Disney Adventures* magazine, and from there I went to Vertigo. I think a lot of comics is learning on the job, as it's a very specific skillset.

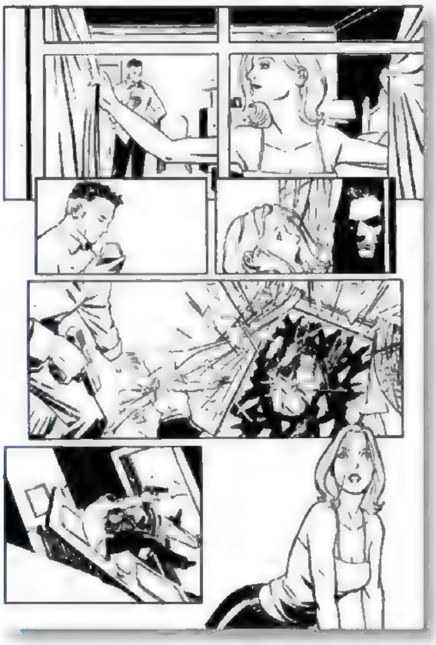
CH: And ever since you've been pretty much exclusively at DC, of course...

CC: And what I've most enjoyed about working there is the variety: having the option of doing Vertigo fare, which is sometimes more thoughtful and more psychological, but being able to balance that with, say, a short run on *Batman*.

Image © Mike Jara Photography

BORN US
HIGH HUMAN TARGET
NOW WONDER WOMAN
MORE www.cliffchiang.com

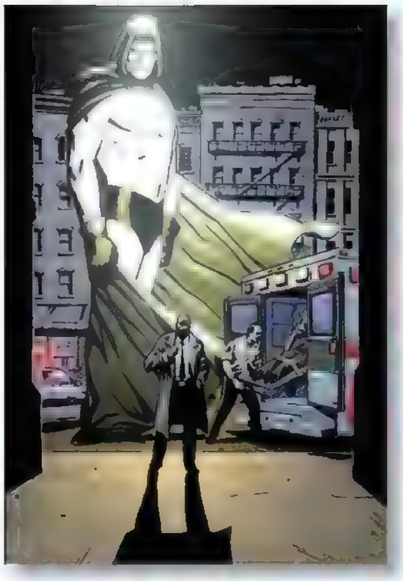
> **“I'd hate to have to draw a certain way for the rest of my life”**

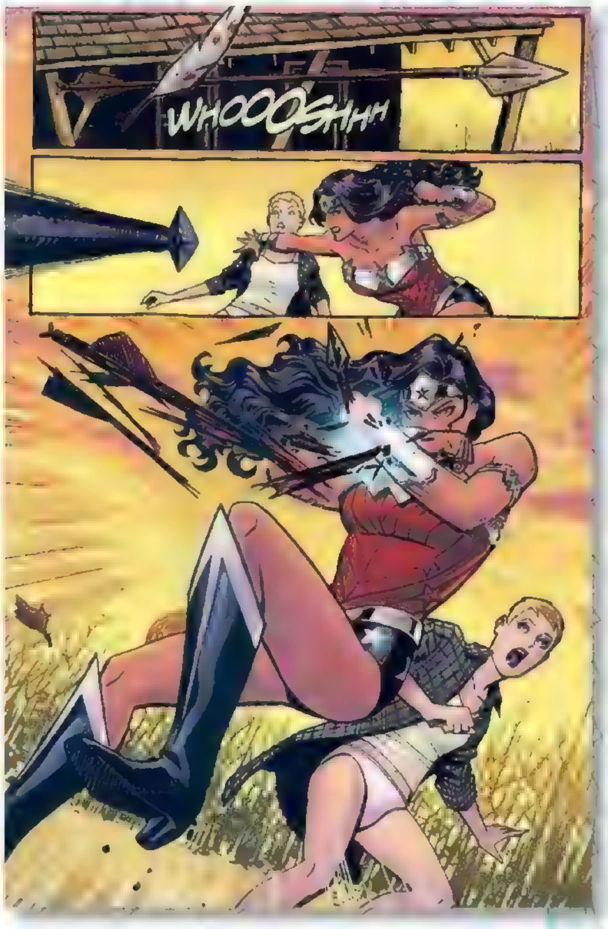


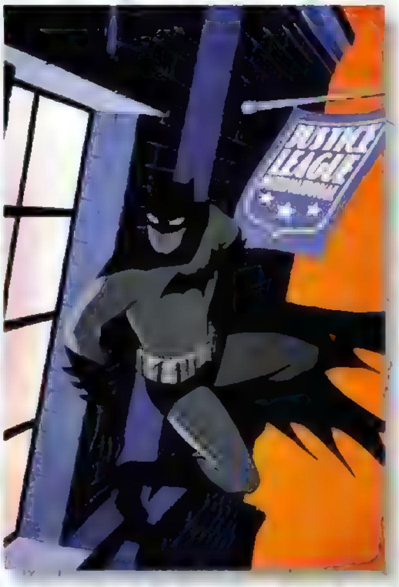
CH: Your work's got a very sophisticated look, we'd say; it's reminiscent of Darwyn Cooke, Javier Pulido, Michael Lark and guys like that...

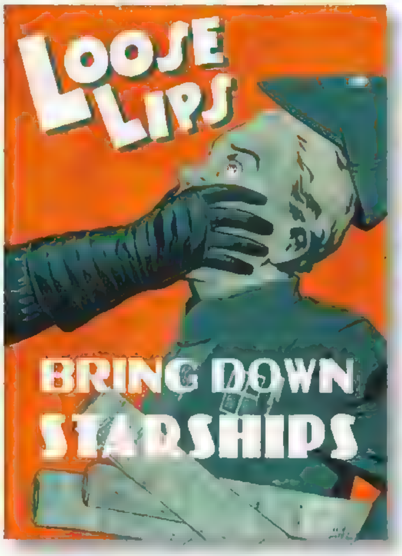
CC: I think there are now several artists, particularly at DC, who've been working in a vein that's more, I don't know, 'graphic' than most comic book art; certainly, sometimes they make a point of using more obvious brushwork. And what's great is that the response to this has, generally, been so positive. When Michael Lark moved from doing his clear line style to his brush style, it was exciting because it suddenly seemed to open up so many different opportunities.

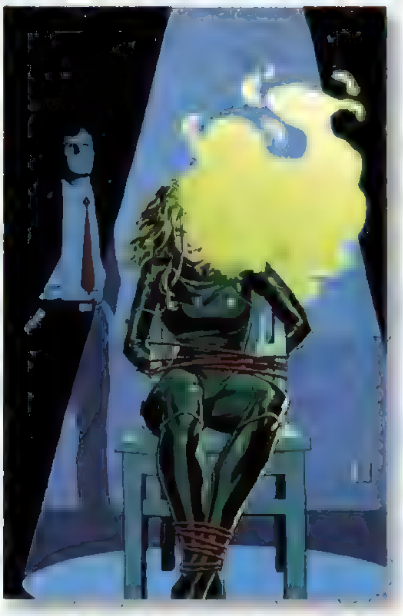
I'm definitely in that tradition, but, personally, I've been trying to push myself in whatever direction makes most sense at the time. For a while it felt like, to distinguish my work from what Darwyn was doing and what Michael was doing, I should maybe try to do something a little bit tighter, which is why you can see such a change to my style over the course of the *Human Target* issues I did. Then, after *Human Target* was finished, I thought, 'I've been doing this Vertigo stuff for such

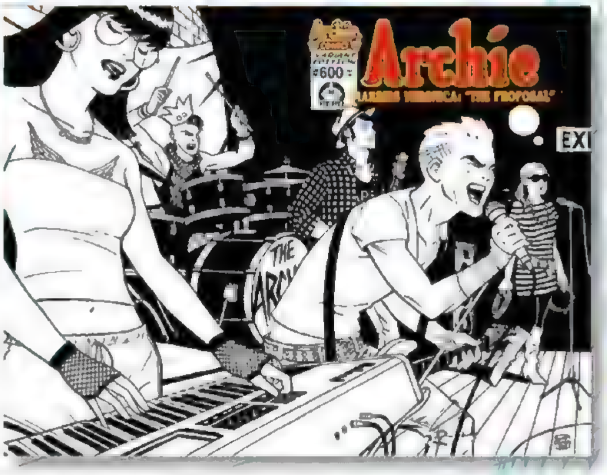


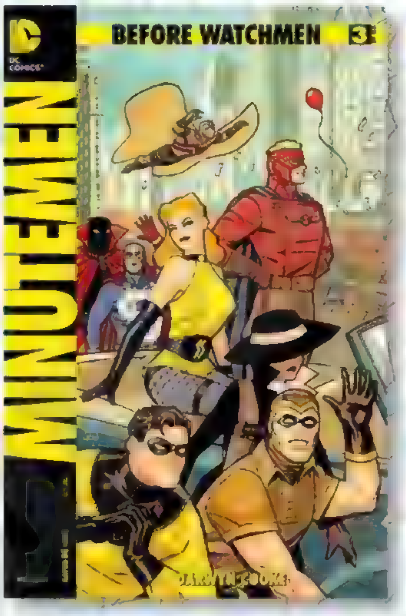









Archie
#600
ARCHIE MARRIES VERONICA: "THE PROPOSAL"
EXI
THE ARCHIES



a long time now, maybe I should try my hand at some mainstream superhero comics instead?' For a while there I got into a period where I was trying to tighten up my work, almost as an academic exercise.

CH: Was that an attempt to keep your art looking fresh?
CC: Oh, that's the thrilling part of it. I would hate to have to draw a certain way for the rest of my life and not be given plenty of latitude to change things. I approach each book almost like an editor would: I think to myself, 'What would be most appropriate for this story?' Or even, 'What would be weird for this kind of story, and how would doing that make this story more interesting?'

CH: So how are you approaching *Wonder Woman*?
CC: We're now going into our second year with *Wonder Woman* and, I must say, I'm very comfortable with the way I'm drawing right now and – though part of me feels a little hesitant to keep doing that – for consistency and deadlines maybe it makes most sense. You know, part of me would actually like to start drawing it so it looks like Jaime Hernandez!

CH: Jamie-esque or not, it's certainly not the sort of look we've come to associate with *Wonder Woman*...
CC: Oh, and I've really enjoyed being able to give it a slightly different look. That it doesn't look like a traditional *Wonder Woman* book, or even a traditional superhero book, is, I think, one of its strengths. One of the things Brian and I were tasked to do was to try to bring in a different audience, and deliver a different look to the title.

CH: One of the things about doing a good monthly comic, of course, is that artists get to develop their work very quickly; they sort of have to, in a way...
CC: Oh, and I'm very critical of my own work – but rather than having that paralyse me, I try to move forward. And yes, that's the beauty of monthly comics, or even partially monthly comics: if I don't get it right one month, I have the next issue to try it differently, to do a better job as opposed to letting it get to me. You know, feeling the need to make each panel perfect can be the enemy; whatever you do, you can't let that slow you right down! CH

Above: Chiang oversaw Spectre's rebirth and made his mark on *Justice League*. He's currently bringing his distinctive style to Wonder Woman, one of comics' biggest icons, and lending his skills to *Before Watchmen*

Cliff Chiang's work can be seen regularly in DC's current *Wonder Woman* title, as well as across assorted covers for the company.

SHAPERS OF WORLDS

High concept, human drama

Brian Wood

He's been slowly developing into one of comics' most inventive writers – but now his one-step-away-from-reality adventure stories are joined by a stint on the biggest franchise of them all...

By Stephen Jewell

Ever since his exclusive contract at DC ended in 2011, Brian Wood has enjoyed playing the comic book field. Currently dividing his time between penning *Conan The Barbarian* and *The Massive* for Dark Horse, and various X assignments for Marvel, the Brooklyn-based author makes his long-awaited return to Image this month, teaming up with artist Ming Doyle on new creator-owned six-parter, *Mara*.

Then, in January, he will relive one of his childhood dreams, launching Dark Horse's latest *Star Wars* title. Featuring covers by Alex Ross – and simply titled *Star Wars* – the Carlos D'Anda-illustrated monthly is set in between the first two movies, *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. "The series is set just after the original film and we'll never actually get to *Empire*," laughs Wood, when *Comic Heroes* meets him at New York Comic Con. "It's kind of just set in that little void."

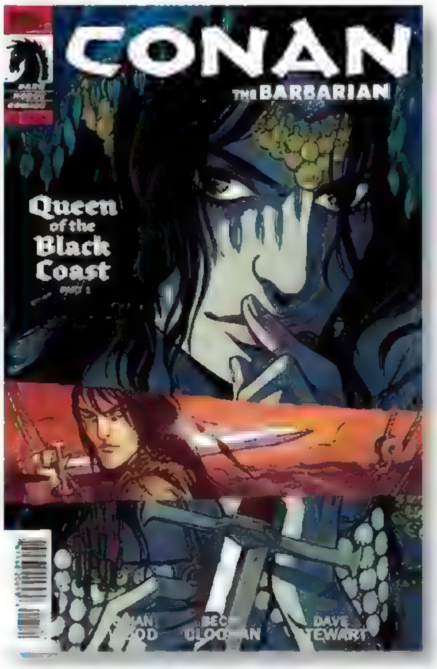
Comic Heroes: What are your memories of first watching *Star Wars* as a child?
Brian Wood: I was five at the time, so I don't know if I understood a whole lot of what I was seeing – but it has definitely stuck with me.

CH: Does your version feature all the iconic characters?
BW: Indeed it does. Apart from Luke, Leia and Han, we also have all those other original guys, like C-3PO and R2-D2, Chewie, Darth Vader and the Emperor. I've loved writing it, although the artists have a lot more work to do than I have to get it right. Lucasfilm checks everything, like all the faces, just to make sure that it's all right. The artist has a rough time – but for me, it's all fun!

CH: You also relaunched *Conan* for Dark Horse recently. We take it you're a long-time fan of the Cimmerian?
BW: Sort of! If there's one thing I've discovered since writing *Conan*, it's that the fans, the true fans, are the most hardcore I have ever come across. Calling myself a fan, while standing in their shadows, is ludicrous.

BORN US
HIGH DMZ
NOW MARA
MORE www.brianwood.com

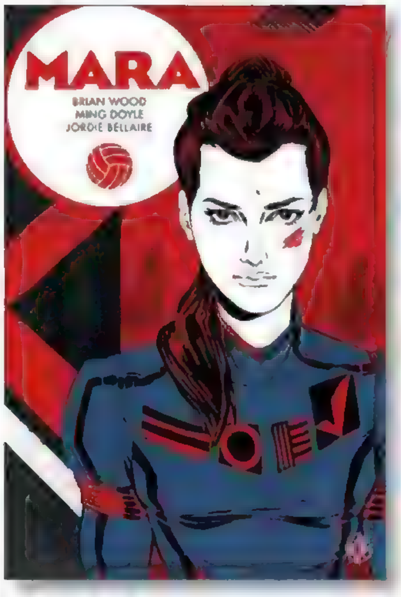
> **"Conan's fans are the most hardcore I have ever come across"**



CH: The short story that you're adapting is 'Queens of the Black Coast', which was one of Robert E Howard's very first *Conan* tales...
BW: #11 comes out this month, and I'm currently up to #16 in terms of writing it, so I'm actually nearing the end of my run, which is with #25. With the story that I'm adapting, the middle part of it is kind of undefined, as several years pass during the story, so I get to write original adventures in that middle time.

CH: After Becky Cloonan and James Harren, artist Declan Shalvey comes onto the book with #10...
BW: I like him a lot, and I worked with him before on Vertigo Viking title *Northlanders*; his girlfriend, Jordie Bellaire, is colouring *Mara* as well. I've only just got to meet him in person, actually, and it feels like it's about time!

CH: Speaking of *Mara*, it sounds like an exciting project. It focuses on a famous sporting heroine, who develops superhuman abilities on live television...
BW: It's set in a future world that's heavily


MARA
BRIAN WOOD
MING DOYLE
JORDIE BELLAIRE

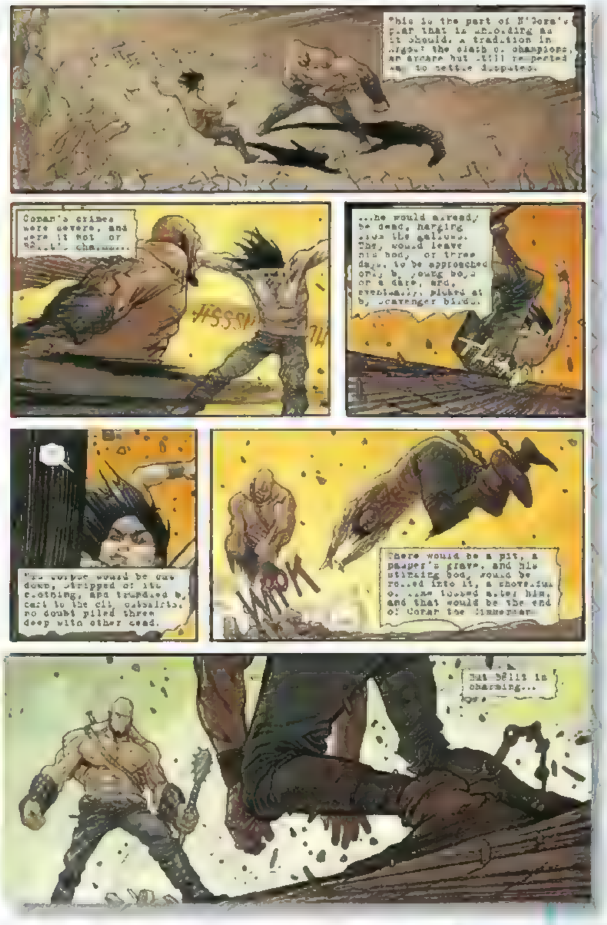
obsessed with sports, and also war, as if the two things are interlinked. It's like everything is a competition, and then Mara Prince – this girl who is like a star athlete, as she's really on top of her game – starts to develop superpowers. So in this world where physical achievement is really everything, it basically makes her a cheat and throws her entire life into doubt, as everybody turns against her. It's about the media and conformity and all the pressure that's put on athletes – especially female athletes – and how it sometimes leads them to overdo it.

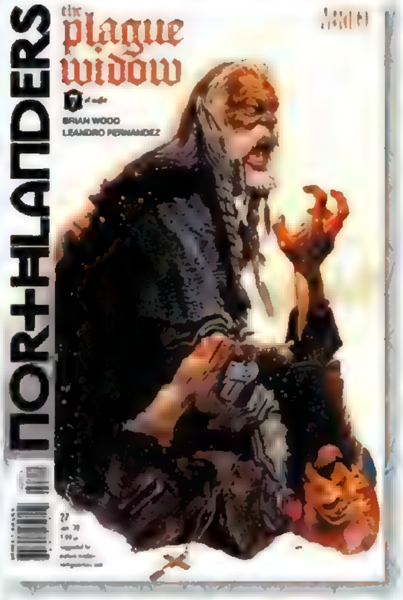
CH: Are you a sports fan?
BW: I'm a fan of certain things. I'm an Olympics fan, which I feel is the best reference for this book. I'm not a baseball or a football fan.

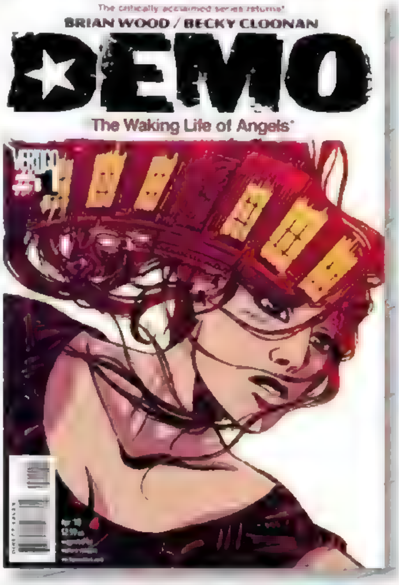
CH: And how's it been working with artist Ming Doyle?
BW: It's been great! I've wanted to work with her for a long time. I asked her if she was cool with this story or if it was maybe out of her comfort zone, but she was really into it.

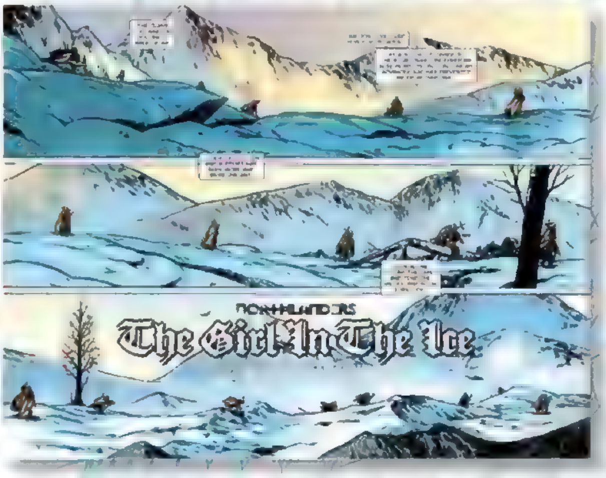
CH: You're also continuing scripting *The Massive*, about a band of environmental activists in a post-apocalyptic world as they search for their missing sister ship. Do you draw on a lot of real-world events for the scenarios that they come across?
BW: I take that as a starting point, and then extrapolate out from there. It's set in a future world, but I look at things like the news and then imagine it being so much worse. It's a strange job I have!

CH: What can we expect from the next few issues?
BW: Everything, really. We're taking the crew around the world, and really showing the effects that the Crash and social breakdown have had on places like the North Pole and all these various continents and oceans. There's an issue coming up that's big on sharks. Everybody loves sharks, so I have a big school of rabid sharks!


This is the part of N'Gora's plan that is unfolding as it should. A tradition in Argos: the clash of champions, an arcane but still respected way to settle disputes.
Conan's crimes were severe, and were it not for Bêlit's charms...
HISSSH
...he would already be dead, hanging from the gallows. They would leave his body, for three days, to be approached only by young boys on a dare, and, eventually, picked at by scavenger birds.
The corpse would be cut down, stripped of its clothing, and trundled by cart to the city outskirts, no doubt piled three deep with other dead.
WAPK
There would be a pit, a pauper's grave, and his stinking body would be rolled into it, a shovelful of lime tossed after him, and that would be the end of Conan the Cimmerian.
But Bêlit is charming...


NORTHLANDERS
the plague widow
7 of eight
BRIAN WOOD
LEANDRO FERNANDEZ
VERTIGO


The critically acclaimed series returns!
BRIAN WOOD / BECKY CLOONAN
DEMO
The Waking Life of Angels
VERTIGO
#1


NORTHLANDERS
The Girl In The Ice

CH: How linked do you feel *The Massive* is with your Vertigo series, *DMZ*, which ended earlier this year?
BW: I haven't really done any environmentally themed work before, as *DMZ* never really went there. But both series are socially aware, and that is the link between them. *The Massive* is the latest project in a series of like-minded concepts I've been working on, that started all the way back in 1997 with *Channel Zero*.

***CH: Channel Zero* was your debut book, of course, and you both wrote and illustrated it. Any plans to return to the drawing board?**
BW: Not really. I still do the occasional cover, but I'm really a full-time writer now. I also do the logos for my books, and have a general say on posters and stuff like that, which is enough.

Above: Wood is currently working with Ming Doyle on *Mara*, and Declan Shalvey on *Conan*. He's worked with Shalvey before, on top-notch Viking title *Northlanders*

CH: You've just wrapped up an eight-issue stint on *X-Men*, but you're continuing to write *Ultimate X-Men*. Does the Ultimate Universe provide you with more opportunities to cut loose than the main Marvel U?
BW: It's hard to compare them, as they're just really different places. It's like you're using a whole different part of your creative brain to write each one. I like it because the characters in *Ultimate X-Men* are so different. It's a certain type of experience when you're writing more established characters. With the Ultimate comics we all share our stories, so it's a really tight-knit group of books.

***The Massive*, with artist Kristen Donaldson, continues from Dark Horse; *Mara*, from Image, is available from the very end of 2012.**

Line of beauty

Scott Kolins

Scott Kolins has not only earned an army of fans with his detailed, individual superhero tales, but seems determined to master every aspect of comic book storytelling too...

By Joel Meadows

Scott Kolins is one of those bold, detailed artists who dominate modern mainstream American comics; he's known for his speed and consistency, and for clean lines and little use of shadow – there's an awful lot of intricate detail to his backgrounds, but the figures themselves are often relatively simple, allowing the colourist plenty of space to shine with interesting shading and lighting techniques. It's an appealing look, at once modern and retro both.

Kolins studied at the famous Joe Kubert School in the '90s, and after two years there, began his professional career at Marvel – *Wolverine* and *Ultimate Fantastic Four* were two major early projects – but since 2003 he's become much more associated with DC, largely thanks to a lengthy, well-received run on *The Flash* with writer Geoff Johns.

Alongside the drawing, he's branched out into writing his own work lately too; a *Solomon Grundy* miniseries for DC, back in 2009, was an early effort, but there's a major new creator-owned series coming soon also…

Comic Heroes: You're a busy man, clearly, and your workload seems prodigious, so why take on the extra effort of writing some stories too…?

Scott Kolins: Okay, I do that, but it's not a regular thing. For instance, my current project is *Green Lantern New Guardians Annual* #1, written by Keith Giffen. I was hoping he'd be doing layouts too, because I've worked with him before in that way and I love it – it gives me a little leg up once in a while, and knocks me out of my own patterns – but in this case I just got a full script from him instead.

He's doing some Green Lantern stuff too, so I think he's joining that whole tribe of Green Lantern writers. Our annual starts a whole new section of the mythos that they'll be dealing with.

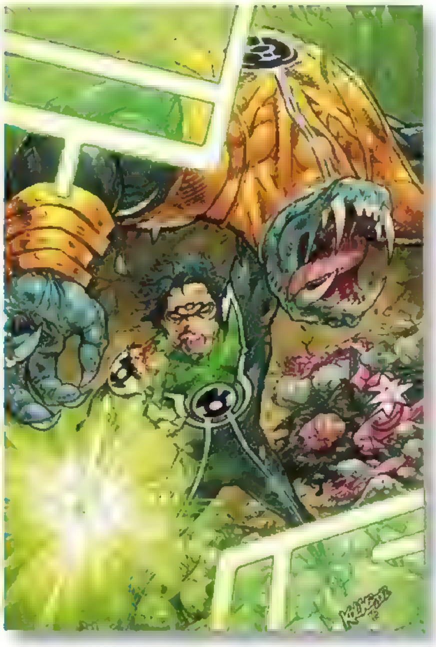
CH: Oh? How so?

SK: Well, for one thing there's a new Green Lantern character, never seen before, from a far away galaxy. But it opens up a whole storyline which Keith is going to be expanding upon, and it all kicks off in this annual. Then, after that, I'll be working on a Larfleeze [Green Lantern villain, wielding the 'Orange light of avarice'] story, which will be a 10-pages-a-month tale serialised in *Threshold*, a new DC space heroes/science fiction anthology series, something like the old *My Greatest Adventure* title DC used to run in the '50s and '60s. Keith is writing that too, and it develops some of his storylines further.

Image © Mike Jara Photography

BORN	SPAIN
HIGH	THE FLASH
NOW	THRESHOLD
MORE	kolinsart.deviant.com

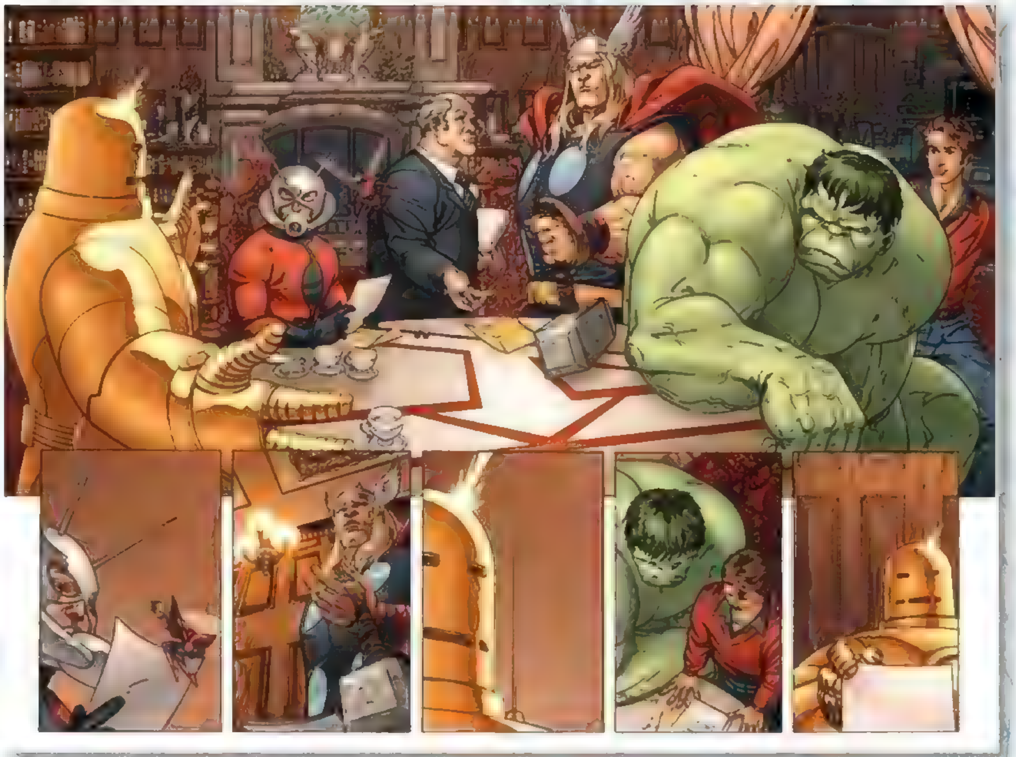
> **"I've really tried to push myself on this one – it's a mix of styles"**

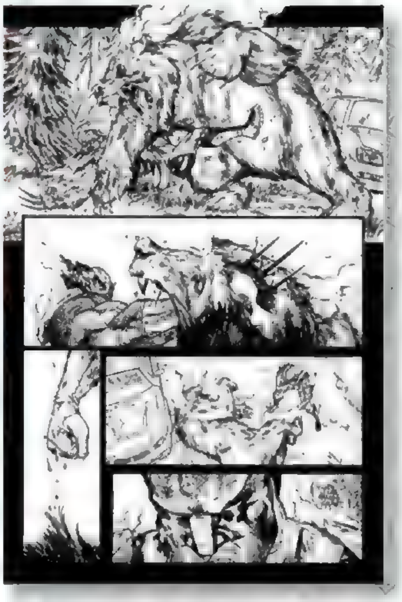


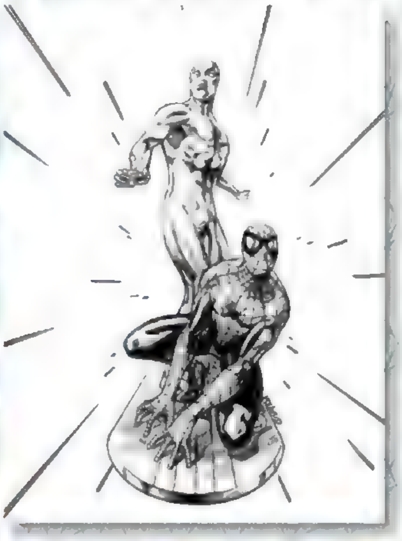
CH: Many artists never turn their hands to writing at all, of course, but a sizeable proportion do. What was it that appealed to you?

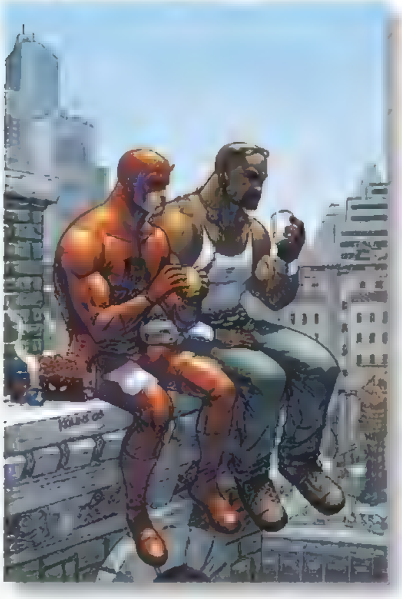
SK: It's mostly just that I find it very satisfying. I was raised on those kinds of creators when I was a kid: John Byrne, George Peréz, Frank Miller… and I'd even go back to Jack Kirby and those guys. They were artists first, and that's how they made most of their money. But they were true storytellers, in the full sense, as well – so they could do it all if they needed to.

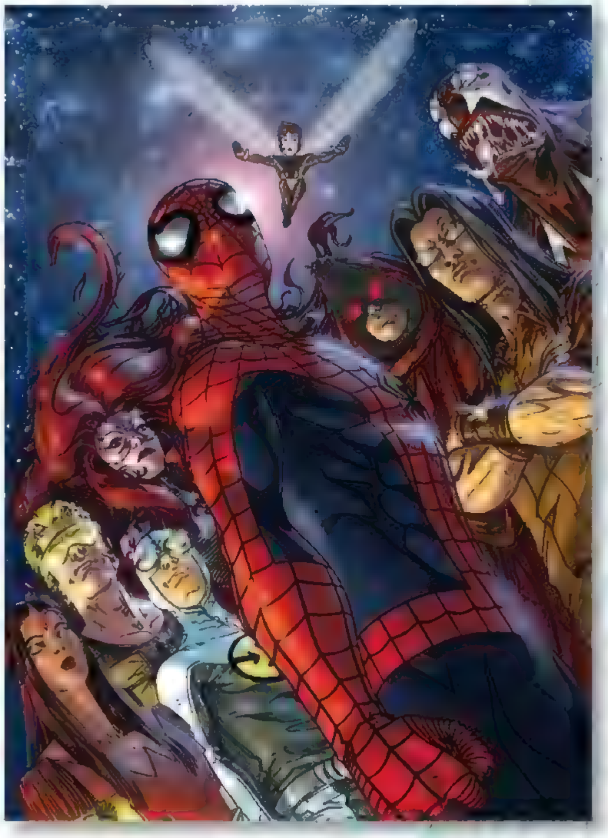
That's what I've been aiming at all these years, mostly waiting for my chance. And DC's been absolutely wonderful, giving me plenty of opportunities which were not

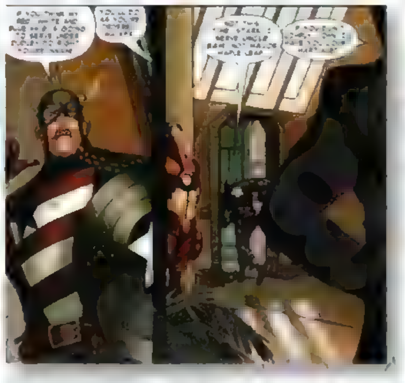












only great – and I think I did a good job – but were huge learning experiences as well.

CH: But it's not turned you off working with other writers, we're guessing...?
SK: Actually it does the reverse – and that's what I found in my entire art career before this too, because I've inked, I've pencilled, I've coloured. I tend to feel that when you don't know how the other jobs work, and you haven't been in that other person's shoes, it can become a little too easy to critique that person, and the work they're doing.

Having been a writer myself – or having done all these other art jobs – helps me, I think; it means that most of the time I'm more patient with the people around me, because I can understand the issues they must be dealing with too. I now realise that, 'You know what? That guy probably had 100 things to deal with that I didn't even know about, to get this far'. Perhaps problems with getting the script approved, or whatever.

CH: You've mostly been working with big-name characters from the Big Two so far, but we hear you've got a little creator-owned project going too...?
SK: Yes, I'm working on it now, and I'll be writing, drawing and colouring. And it's not too far away either, actually, as I've got the whole first issue done. The second issue is drawn too, and the third and fourth are written, so we're hoping to announce it soon – the plan is to get it out in the spring. I've really tried to push myself on this one, and stylistically it's a mix between my recent *Flash* style and some of the other styles I've had.

I'm really pushing it with the colouring too. I used to colour a lot of my own covers, but then that tailed off – down to time constraints, mostly. But I'm trying to make up for that with this project, because that's one of the things that will make it more unique. I'm hoping that, after *Flash* or *Grundy* or other things I've been known for, this could be the next big step. CH

Above: Kolins has wielded his pencils on loads of different sci-fi and superhero books including *Wolverine*, *Thor* and *Beyond!*

***Threshold*, DC's new science fiction equivalent to fantasy anthology *Sword Of Sorcery*, is expected mid-January.**

Human evil, weaponised

Garth Ennis

What's scarier than a sea of mindless, brain-chomping zombies? How about the evil that lurks in the twisted, ever-inventive minds of men?

By Matt Bielby

Garth Ennis, one of our most consistently inventive writers, has made no secret of his lack of interest in superheroes; when he can avoid them, he will, and when he has to put them front-and-centre – well, they rarely get away with their dignity intact. This being the case, one of his natural homes has become the smaller, edgier comic book publishers like Avatar – and genres like horror, where the limits are few and far away, and spandex costumes rarely make an appearance.

Two recent hits have been *Crossed* – an inventive variation on the zombie tale – and *Stitched*, soldiers versus supernatural forces in Afghanistan...

Comic Heroes: How did *Crossed* come about? Was it you thinking about ways to do a spin on the classic zombie storyline?

Garth Ennis: The starting point was wanting to do a horror story and make it genuinely horrific. No easy monsters with easy solutions, no tragic or misunderstood monsters that teenagers can cosy up to. Old fashioned hardcore stuff.

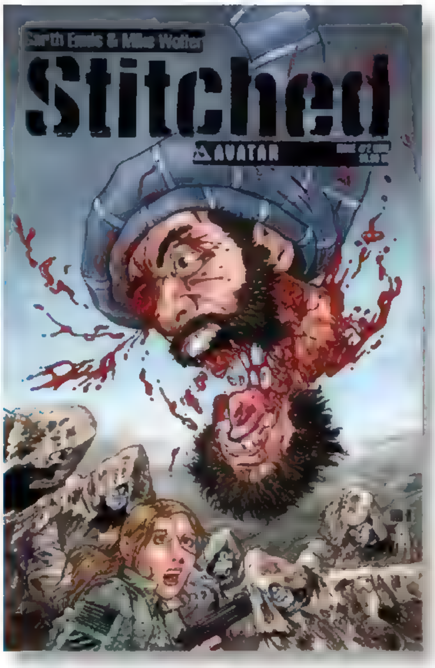
What came next was an odd dream I had, wherein some friends and I were trapped in their house by a horde of zombies. Except, on closer examination they weren't zombies, they were people, and they were gleefully looking forward to getting their hands on us. Their faces were twisted with unimaginable cruelty; they clearly had the nastiest shit imaginable planned. Then I woke up.

And what fed into *Crossed* were some of the gloomier thoughts I'd been having in the preceding years – about America not feeling like America in 2003-4, with Bush's government riding roughshod over whatever aspect of government or the constitution that it chose, and the man's subsequent re-election; about the Katrina disaster and abandonment of its victims in 2005 (you're on your own in the storm, no one's coming to save you); about the inhumanity of humanity coming to the fore (a general sense of the worst horror stories being the real life ones, courtesy of the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Gestapo, the Taliban and al-Qaeda, various nightmares in Bosnia and Rwanda, and so on). The general idea was to turn humanity itself into the villain: to weaponise human evil as a virus.

MIDTOWN COMICS

Image © Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons

BORN NORTHERN IRELAND
HIGH PREACHER
NOW CROSSED
MORE www.garthennis.net



> **"I wanted to make a genuinely horrific horror story"**

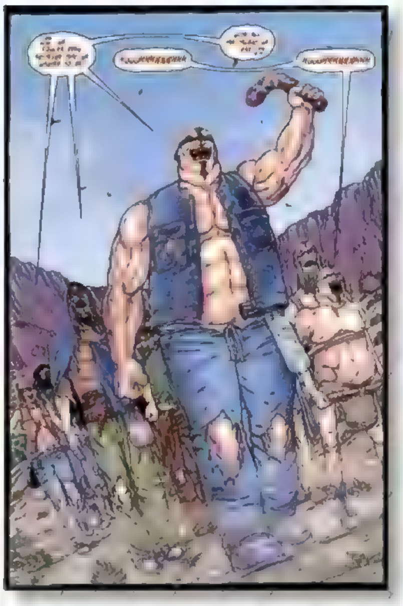
CH: What're the key differences between your villains and standard zombies?

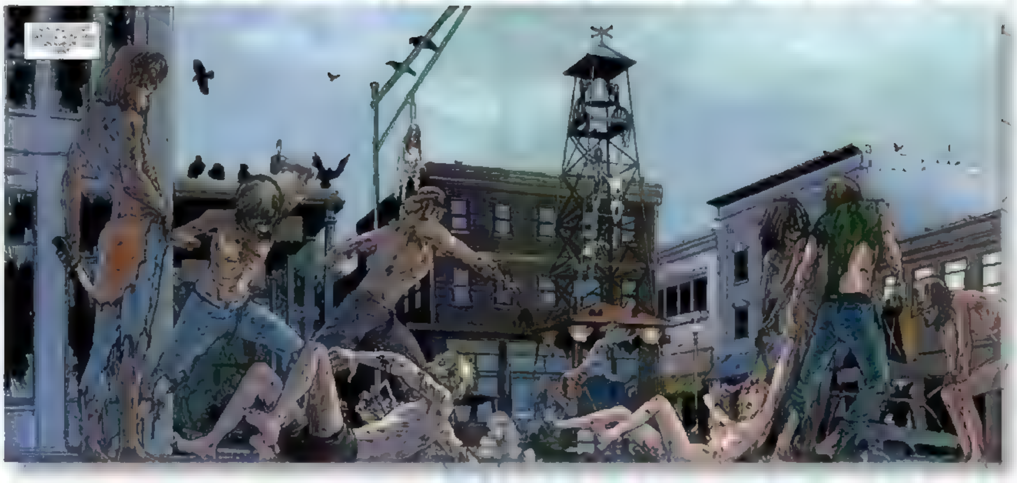
GE: I suppose the Crossed are driven by evil and zombies by hunger. Zombies are essentially mindless, the Crossed are not – their problem is that the very worst part of their minds has come to the fore.

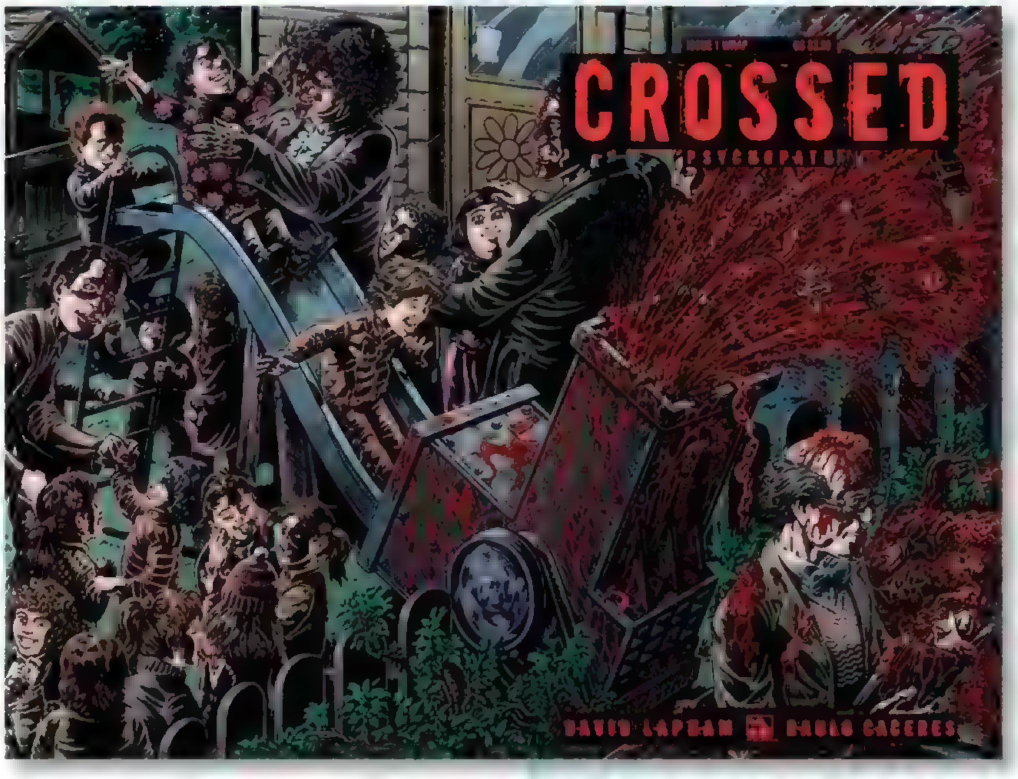
When people come up with twists on the zombie story they tend to try to avoid the tag, but I don't mind it – you can call *Crossed* a zombie story, in the sense of a horde of inhuman figures coming at you, howling and moaning. Fine by me.

CH: Which moments of ultra-violence came to you first?

GE: The two scenes in the first story that stick with me would be Cindy and Stan executing the kids who have turned out to be damaged goods, and Stan shooting the guy who kicks the dog. And I quite like Cindy shooting the Crossed chasing the blind girl through the woods – that's nice and cinematic.







CH: Can stories like this get too grim, or is there no such thing?
GE: I've gone about as far as I want to, but that doesn't mean others won't go further. I hit my limits a long time before Avatar publisher William Christensen hits his, for instance, and it's quite obvious that David Lapham is completely off the charts.

CH: Of course, there are human monsters to deal with too. Are they more intriguing to you, ultimately, than the Crossed?
GE: Yes. It's what people will do to survive that interests me, what they'll allow themselves to become. What was in them to begin with that situations like this will bring out – in other words, how like the Crossed they're prepared to behave.

Of course, the Crossed have a certain inventive quality to their cruelty that's occasionally going to result in some unpleasantly eye-opening stuff – only natural, considering the degree of imagination that evil people have shown down the years, whenever they gain total dominance over others. But their instincts will always drive them to go as far as they can straight away, whereas the survivors have their own set of priorities.

CH: With *Crossed*, you've passed a creator-owned project into new hands, which you never normally do...
GE: I'd originally intended to stop after the first 10-parter, but Christensen pointed out that what we had here was quite an effective little horror 'world' in which lots more stories could be told. It had been fairly successful, so why stop?

We set up some ground rules, essentially to do with what the Crossed are and what they will and won't do, and what can and can't happen in their world (I also stipulated that my own characters would be left alone; as far as I was concerned Cindy, Stan and the dog had earned a break). After that it was just a question of coming up with appropriate writers: we agreed that it should be a question of a certain degree of talent – we weren't so concerned about whether anyone had a particular background in horror. And then we were off to the races.

I'll pop back to the ongoing book every year and do three to four issues, beginning with #25 and a story called 'The Fatal Englishman' – in which someone decides to have a go back at the Crossed. After that I'll be tackling what Christensen's calling our Patient Zero story, in #50.

CH: You've said that *Stitched* developed in your head as a behind-the-lines war story, primarily, and you wrote an initial film treatment sans fantasy elements. Why did you drag in the horror and the supernatural?
GE: Probably to make things a little bit more lively – to get a horror movie audience interested.

CH: You made a short film version of the story first, a new departure. How did that come about? Was it fun?
GE: I always fancied trying it. Yes, it was lots of fun. And I will be doing more, beginning with these *Crossed* 'webisodes' some time next year.

Above: Dark, profane and violent – Ennis' work (and that of his successors) on *Crossed* is certainly not for the squeamish amongst us.

CH: These two stories may look to the outsider like twinned projects, but how much are they linked in your head?
GE: Nothing to do with each other. *Stitched* was in-and-out, over-and-done-with. *Crossed* I reckon I'll be involved with for some time to come.

CH: With *The Boys* now winding up, what's next?
GE: Lots of stuff: *Fury* has another seven issues to run, a new series of *Battlefields* has just started, also a cop drama called *Red Team*, coming from Dynamite in the spring. Then there's a new war series in the *Battlefields* mold from Avatar – the first three stories will feature US bombers over Berlin, Israeli tanks on the Golan Heights in 1973, and German soldiers in East Prussia at the end of the war. More *Crossed*, as mentioned, including the live-action project; the long-awaited third series of *Dicks*, with me old oppo John McCrea; and looking further ahead, a couple more titles from Avatar – one's a sci-fi book, and one's a bit of an oddity. But you'll know it when you see it! **CH**

***Crossed Badlands* and *Crossed Volume 4* are out from Avatar/Titan.**

Drawn to superheroes

Kevin Maguire

His '80s take on the Justice League was ground-breaking and much loved, but with *World's Finest* he might just have found his perfect book...

By Joel Meadows

For all their skills at action sequences or punchy splash pages, the number of great comic book artists who can do consistently amazing facial expressions is surprisingly small – and those who can handle physical comedy smaller still. Somewhere at their head: Kevin Maguire.

With his clean lines, embrace of the goofy, and wide range of physical types, Maguire's '80s take on DC's *Justice League* series, as written by Keith Giffen and JM DeMatteis, is one of the true high points of the superhero team book – and certainly one of the few packed with genuine laugh-out-loud moments.

Since then, Maguire has gone on to work on everything from *Batman* and *Metal Men* for DC to *Captain America* and *Defenders* at Marvel; for each project he's brought a distinctive look, and heaps of personality.

Currently sharing pencilling duties with George Peréz on the New 52 book *World's Finest* – headliners: Power Girl and Huntress – Maguire seems to have found another perfect platform for his singular approach to the superhero tale...

Comic Heroes: So, how are you getting on with your new girls?

Kevin Maguire: I'd say I'm starting to get a real feel for the characters, which definitely helps! I wasn't actually that familiar with a lot of them before, but that's okay because it's kind of all-new anyway, because this is the New 52. But especially with Helena [Huntress], I'm starting to get a real sense of her. It's great fun.

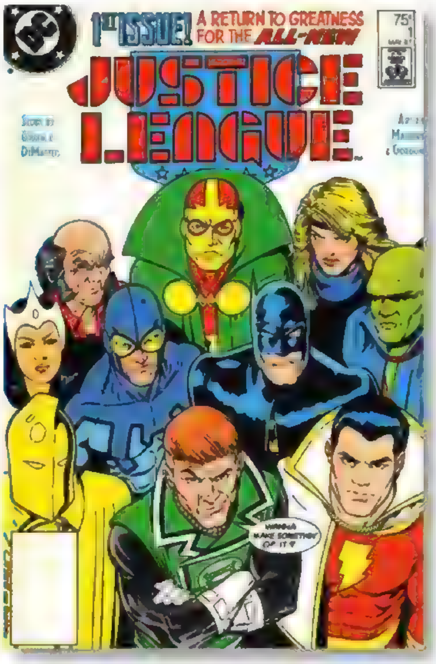
CH: And like the old *World's Finest* worked because Batman and Superman are almost polar opposites, these two girls are very different creatures...

KM: They are very much night and day. I was just talking to Paul Levitz [the writer on the book] about this, actually. Helena has got chess moves going on in her head and she's very complicated, whereas Kara [Power Girl] is just indestructible and pretty much fearless. So it's a nice yin and yang with the two of them. Also, it's a great change of pace to be on a book that's selling for a change!

Image © Mike Jara Photography

BORN US
HIGH JUSTICE LEAGUE
NOW WORLD'S FINEST
MORE twitter.com/maguirekevin

> **"I always gravitate towards strong female characters"**


1st ISSUE! A RETURN TO GREATNESS FOR THE ALL-NEW
75¢
JUSTICE LEAGUE

CH: You've certainly become associated with female protagonists over the years...

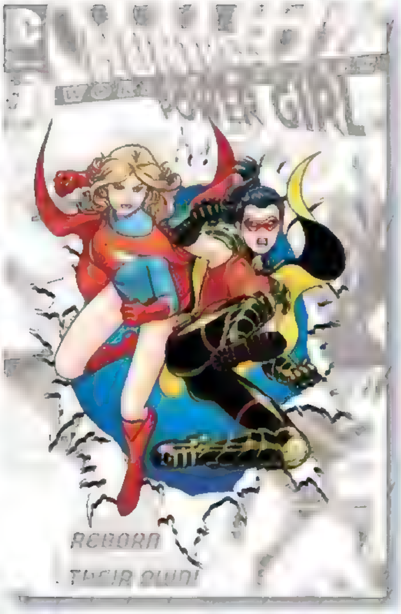
KM: Well, I always gravitate towards strong female characters. I like them, and I like the ladies. What can I say?

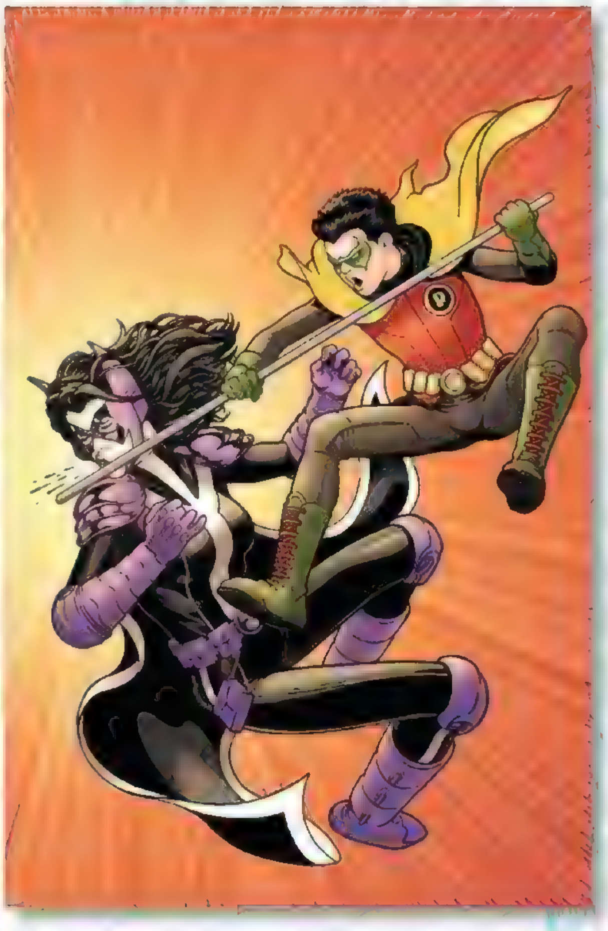
CH: The look of Huntress and Power Girl has changed for the New 52; how much input did you have into that?

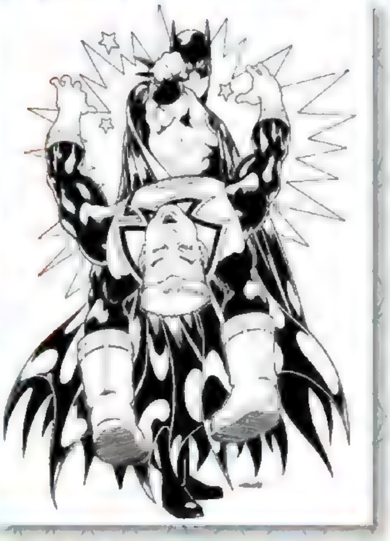
KM: I was somewhat involved, sure, but I didn't come up with the final design. I was given designs that a couple of other people did, and Power Girl – for instance – was very dark, in black and blue. So I said, "No, it's got to be bright; it's got to be red and yellow and white, because Huntress is the dark character and she's the light character." The design I did ended up being in the solicitation for George's cover, but that wasn't a final approved thing. Some people liked it, and a few people don't.

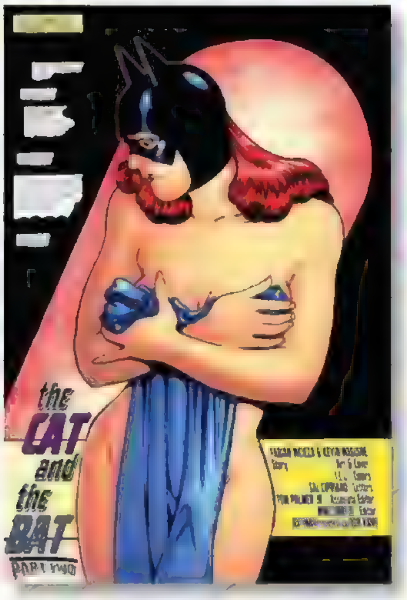
CH: It surprises some people that you've so rigidly stuck with superheroes throughout your career...

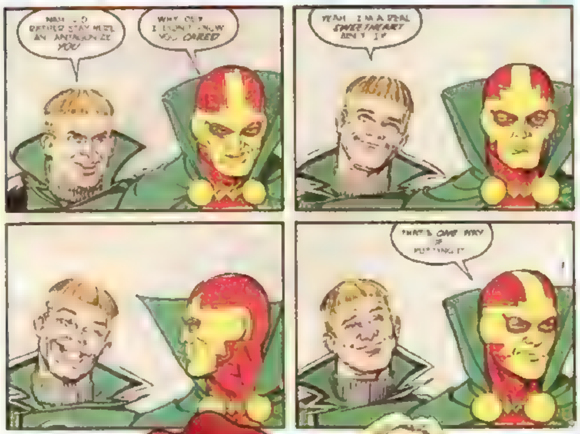
KM: It's just my preference. I don't imagine doing horror or romance. I like superhero comics. I've loved them since childhood.

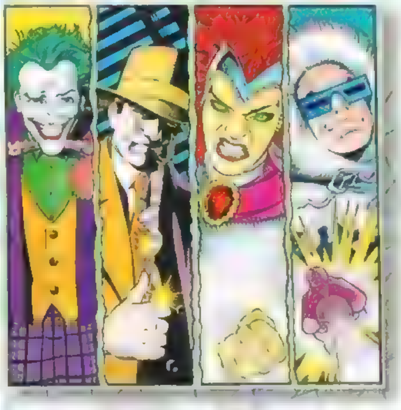


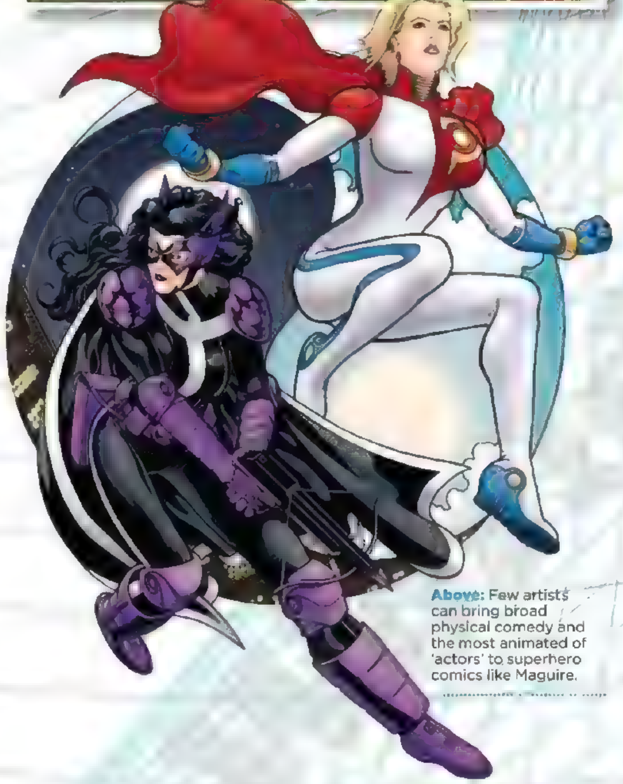





the CAT and the BAT
PART TWO







CH: In the past you've used other inkers, but now you've started to do the finishes yourself. What made you change your mind on that?

KM: Well, you're right; it's only over the last couple of years that I've been inking my own stuff – before that I had other inkers, or I was doing my pages in very tight pencil, then scanning it into the computer and cleaning it up there. I was never good with a brush or a Crowquill pen. It was always very messy, and you could never do it with markers because it would fade and just look crap.

But Micro Markers are really good, and they've been working really well for me. When you have an inker, what people are seeing is not your artwork, but someone's interpretation of your artwork. So I prefer having the control.

CH: Over the past couple of years, DC has been reissuing the '80s *Justice League* comics as trade paperbacks and hardcovers...

KM: I know, and for me it's very uncomfortable looking at it because I just see all the mistakes, and think, "Ah, all these figures are so stiff."

Above: Few artists can bring broad physical comedy and the most animated of 'actors' to superhero comics like Maguire.

CH: Finally, how do you feel about the future of comics right now?

KM: You can't underestimate the ability to access comics immediately. Now, if you're reading about a comic at 3am, you can press a button and be reading it right then. For people who don't live near a comic shop or have one close to where they work, it's perfect; I think it affords more people the opportunity to get around to reading books. It's not a collectible thing, though, so the readers might be very different – if you're buying a book online it's because you want to follow the story, not because you just want to own it. **CH**

Kevin Maguire will continue on *World's Finest* for the foreseeable.

MONSTER MASH

Superheroes are all very well, but sometimes there's only so much of these golden, perfect demigods we can take. **By Matt Bielby**

All images © respective copyright holders

Move over, Justice League. See you, Avengers. Sometimes we'd rather read about the monsters, the man-beasts, the broken creatures – the comic book heroes that drag a goodly helping of horror into the mix; the guys we wouldn't actually *want* to be. Welcome, then, to our selection of the most compelling, most dynamic monsters in comics – heroes in the main, of a sort, but as far away from Superman, or even the domestically troubled Spider-Man, as it's possible to imagine.

Some of these guys first appeared in the early days of comics, some are amongst the biggest names the industry has, and a few come from the British tradition – where the overly perfect is suspect, and broken biscuits far more loved. But we make no excuses for the dominance of one period in particular here, the horror revival that suddenly reinvigorated American comics, and Marvel in particular, in the early '70s.

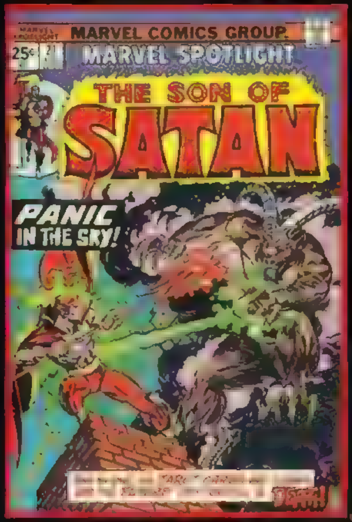
Who cares that this resurgence of the nasty didn't always come from a particular love of the form so much as a general desperate thrashing around, trying to find a genre with legs that could keep the failing industry afloat? (This coupled with a handy weakening of the Comic Code, of course.)

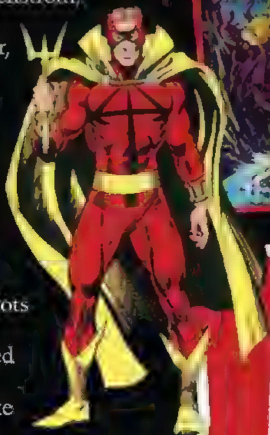
Part of Stan Lee's genius at Marvel had always been that he knew the power of ongoing characters, and so instead of the mainly one-shot monsters he and Jack Kirby had created at the start of the '60s – like Grottu or Spragg, the Living Hill, in anthologies like *Tales To Astonish* – he now pushed for new, continuing monstrous heroes. The results were astounding…

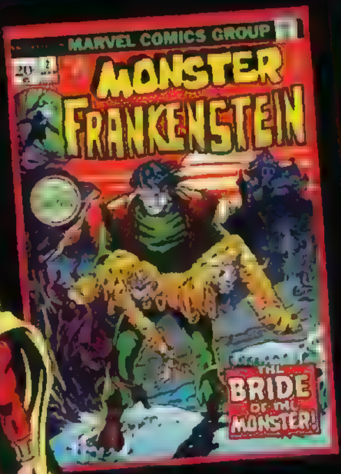
20

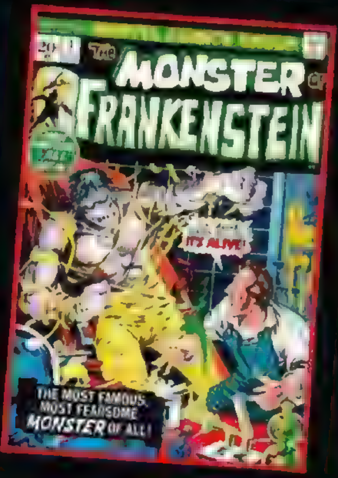
SON OF SATAN

Spinning out of *Ghost Rider* and into his own strip (in *Marvel Spotlight* #12, October 1973) came this superhero take on *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*, in which Daimon Hellstrom, college prof and occult investigator, discovers he's the devil's son, but now uses his demonic powers to battle Old Nick instead of joining him. Herb Trimpe drew it, and though not bad – lots of well-muscled demons! – it lacked the moodiness someone like Mike Ploog might have brought to the table. Still, it had legs, and Hellstrom (with his devilish parentage now somewhat hidden away) remains a consistent minor player in the Marvel Universe.


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
MARVEL SPOTLIGHT
THE SON OF SATAN
PANIC IN THE SKY!



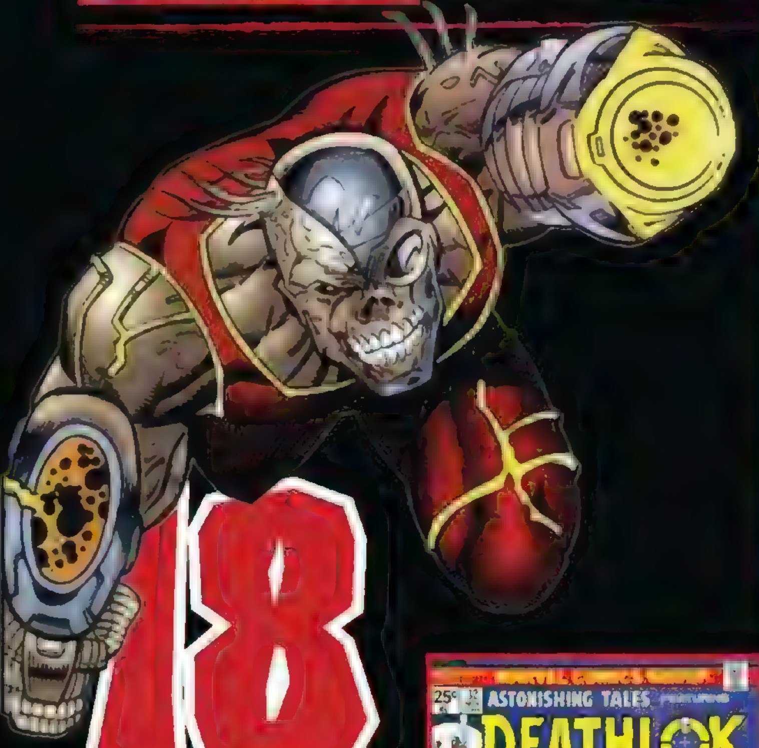

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
MONSTER FRANKENSTEIN
THE BRIDE OF THE MONSTER!


THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN
IT'S ALIVE!
THE MOST FAMOUS, MOST FEARSOME MONSTER OF ALL!

19

FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

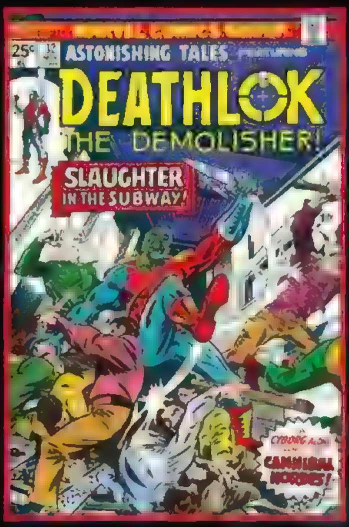
Never a superstar in the comics like he's been in other mediums, nevertheless Frankenstein's monster has had numerous stabs at stardom: in 1973's Marvel title *Monster Of Frankenstein*, a rather beautiful, emotional take on the original Mary Shelly novel by Mike Ploog and Gary Friedrich; in the Dell Comics series ('celebrated' elsewhere this issue); and in DC Comics numerous times over the years, notably since Grant Morrison reintroduced him as part of his 2005 *Seven Soldiers* series, a Nick Fury-esque take on this reanimated corpse-amalgam that has since starred in an ongoing New 52 series, *Frankenstein, Agent of SHADE*, and will now be moving into *Justice League Dark*.



18

DEATHLOK

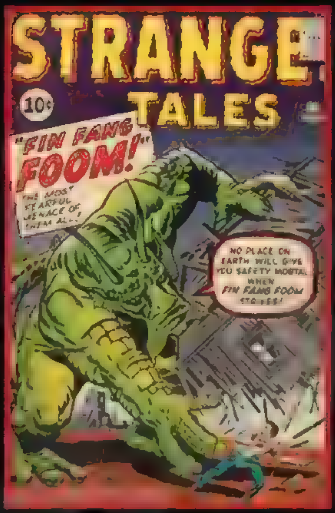
Deathlok the Demolisher, Rich Buckler and Doug Moench's before-his-time future cyborg zombie soldier, is a remarkably *2000 AD*-ish creation for early '70s Marvel; its hippy '70s vibe, however, would have been laughed out of court by the tough-as-nails Galaxy's Greatest Comic gang. Buckler explains his development on page 44.

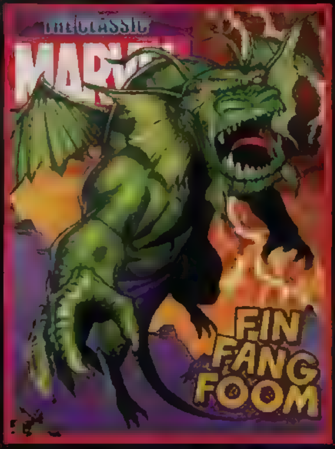

25¢
ASTONISHING TALES FEATURING
DEATHLOK THE DEMOLISHER!
SLAUGHTER IN THE SUBWAY!
CANNIBAL HORDES!

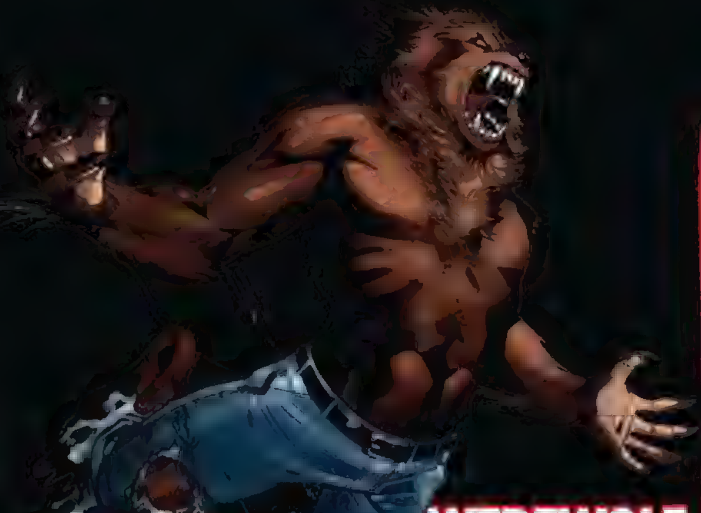
17

FIN FANG FOOM

He's no series-leading superstar like some on this list, but Fin Fang Foom remains a cult star of the comics regardless, one of the army of goofily-named monsters dreamed up by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby around 1960 (he actually debuted in *Strange Tales* #89, October 1961), his name actually inspired, Lee claimed, by the title of the 1934 movie *Chu Chin Chow*. Following his initial one-shot appearance – a young Chinese lad lures him into attacking invading Communist forces – FFF wasn't seen again until decades later, his first extended appearances being in *Iron Man* issues of the '90s. The secret of his success: that name, his sorrowful bearded appearance, the fact that this is one modest dragon who's mostly depicted wearing hugely oversized shorts. There's still no explanation as to where he might have got them...


STRANGE TALES
10¢
"FIN FANG FOOM!"
THE MOST FEARFUL MENACE OF THEM ALL...!
NO PLACE ON EARTH WILL GIVE YOU SAFETY MORTAL WHEN FIN FANG FOOM STRIKES!


THE CLASSIC
MARVEL
FIN FANG FOOM

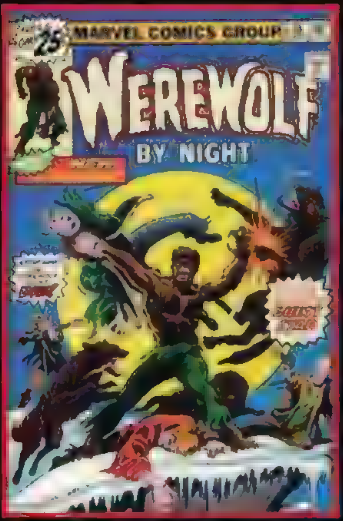


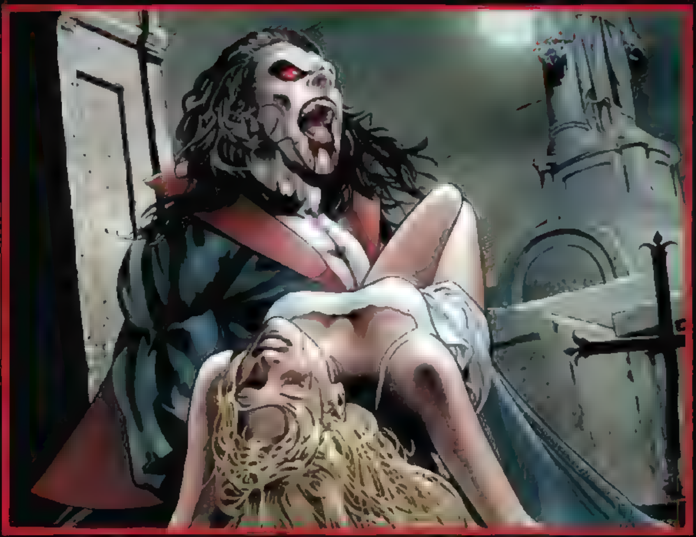
16

WEREWOLF BY NIGHT

When #96-98's famous drug story in *Amazing Spider-Man* encouraged a loosening of the draconian Comics Code, including the repeal of its stipulations against vampires, werewolves and the walking dead, Marvel was on it in a flash, Roy Thomas conjuring from nowhere a whole horror line. But his would be horror icons fashioned in the superhero mould, with strong names and individual looks, and continuing, sympathetic super-powered characters; like Spider-Man, they would have reoccurring enemies, extensive supporting casts, angst-ridden heroes and subplots designed to run for years.

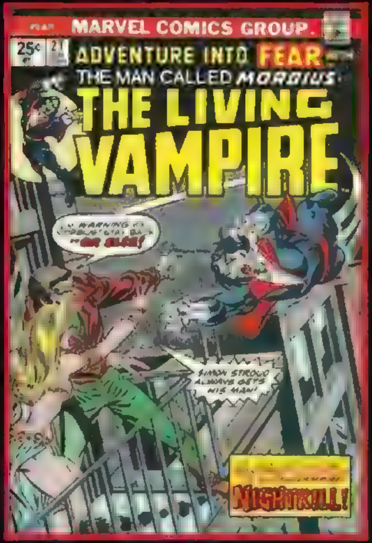
First out of the gate, in an early 1972 issue of *Marvel Spotlight,* was *Werewolf By Night*, an immediate strong-seller – he got his own title late that year – who survived numerous creative hands (Thomas, Gerry Conway, Len Wein, finally Marv Wolfman) to prove a remarkably consistent draw, with trendy, alienated hero Jack Russell (yes, really) hiding his curse from those who love him, not least his devoted, confused sister, Lissa. The stories weren't much, all told, but what made the thing work was new artist Mike Ploog, whose work was certainly lively, and mixed a superhero style with the distorted, freakish look of old EC; there was some Will Eisner in here, a little Jack Davis. Silly plots for sure, and the constant voiceover by Russell can grate, but Werewolf's an enduring '70s icon nonetheless – and, as with every '70s Marvel character, he's been revived a number of times since.





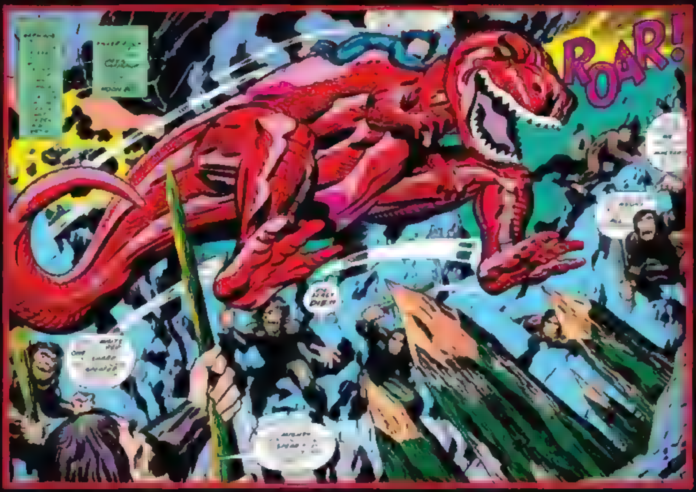
15

MORBIUS, THE LIVING VAMPIRE



By 1973 the brief horror revival was winding down, but there was still time for some last hurrahs. Chief amongst these was Steve Gerber and Gil Kan's *Morbius, the Living Vampire*, an intriguing sci-fi take on Dracula. Starting as a tragic Spider-Man villain, he was headlining both colour anthology *Adventure Into Fear* and black-and-white horror mag *Vampire Tales* by the mid-'70s; the twist was that our hero, Dr Michael Morbius, was turned into a vampiric creature by radiation, not supernatural means.

Sporting a Freddy Mercury-meets-Vampirella superhero suit – a variation on traditional Dracula garb – paired with alabaster skin and a semi-human face twisted into something approximating that of a vampire bat, he certainly made for a striking visual – and an enduring one as well. Revived as part of the early '90s 'Midnight Sons' initiative, he's about to have another stab at the big time as part of Marvel Now!

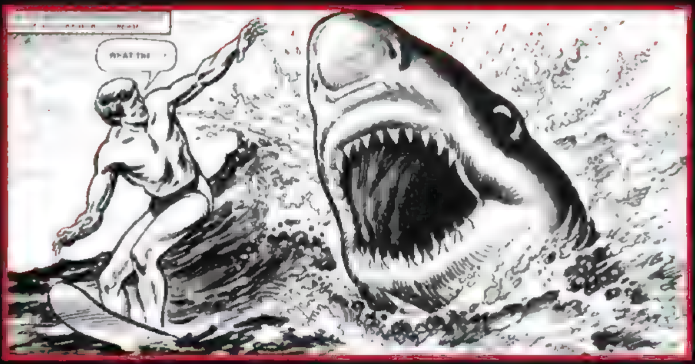


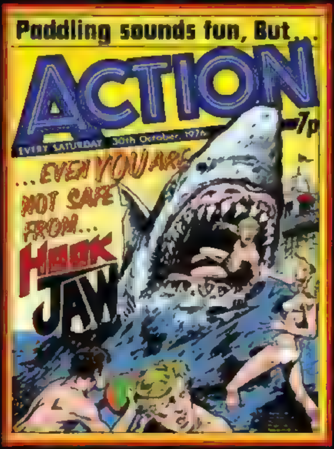
14

DEVIL DINOSAUR

Even during Jack Kirby's lowest ebbs – and one of these was surely the late '70s, as he ploughed on with *Machine Man* and his new, unloved take on *Black Panther* to largely confused derision – he could still dream up concepts with bizarre power. One such was Devil Dinosaur – the adventures of a bright red T rex and his ape-like early human companion, Moon-Boy, in some sort of prehistoric parallel universe – which lasted just nine issues, and has something of a rushed, not-quite-thought-through feel.

Forget all that, though, and just allow yourself to be whacked between the eyes by the audacity of the basic concept. Even by Kirby's standards, it's hard to think of a loopier, more charming creation.




Paddling sounds fun, But...
ACTION
EVERY SATURDAY 30th October, 1976
7p
...EVEN YOU ARE NOT SAFE FROM...
HOOK JAW

13

HOOK JAW

Pat Mills loves a man-eating beastie, so does John Wagner, and the guiding lights of early *2000 AD* made sure it was packed with the things, from assorted T rex (like Old One Eye and Satanus, celebrated by Mills elsewhere in this issue) to Shako the polar bear, star of this issue's *Giant-Size Sidekick*.

All, of course, owe their idiot-chomping rampages to the success of Hook Jaw in the earlier British anthology comic, *Action*, a great white shark – obvious cousin to movieland's Jaws – equipped with a huge gaff hook sticking out of its chin and a penchant for chomping on divers, oil men, and anyone else he could get his teeth into (the more venal and less sympathetic the better). Like many on this list, Hook Jaw is both hero and villain – the perfect protagonist for a gleefully violent comic.

40¢
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
WHATEVER KNOWS FEAR BURNS AT THE TOUCH OF
THE MAN-THING
1ST ISSUE

11

MAN-THING

Inspired by the news that Skywald was planning a revival of '50s swamp monster The Heap, Roy Thomas at Marvel pushed Gerry Conway and Gray Morrow to come up with a knock-off; their Man-Thing (debuting in *Savage Tales* #1, of early 1971) was a scientist, experimenting ill-advisedly in a lonely swamp, now transformed into a creature that couldn't talk – or think, really – and had a strange, expressionless face dominated by huge globe-like eyes and a bizarre elephant trunk.

The potential for such an ugly mute seemed limited, but reader reaction was good; he got his own series in late 1972, but with generally static art by Morrow (and, later, Val Mayerik) Conway floundered. There was purple prose aplenty here, oh yes, but precious little action. But then along came a new writer, Steve Gerber – an enthusiastic, ex-fan funnyman, who seemed to relish his outsider status – and Man-Thing finally came to life. Gerber celebrated Marvel's characters not so much for their thrilling adventures as their basic weirdness, and few heroes were weirder than this one. Man-Thing has been revived many times since, but the Gerber years are the defining ones; they're celebrated on page 52 this issue.

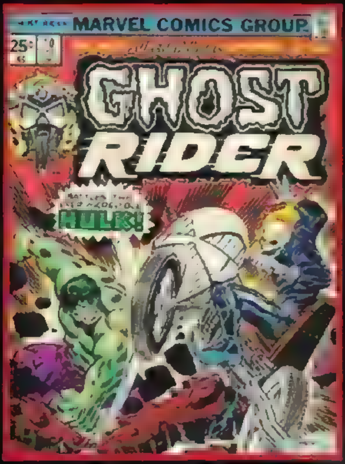
THE HEAP
SINISTER SCYTHE!

12

THE HEAP

Father of all the muck-monsters – Man-Thing and Swamp Thing being but the most prominent – was this early '40s creation from *Airboy Comics* and others, produced by the long-forgotten Hillman Periodicals. Rights to The Heap have passed to Skywald, Eclipse and Image over the years, so he's never quite disappeared, but in truth his look – like nothing so much as a walking hedge, or perhaps a very dirty haystack – has little of the strange power of some of his children.

Still, his origin – German WW1 ace crashes into a Polish swamp, to be reborn as guess what? – and confused wanderings, vaguely trying to do what's right but feared by most he meets, have been hugely influential. He even had a kid sidekick called Rickie for a while – Rick Jones, but 15 years earlier.

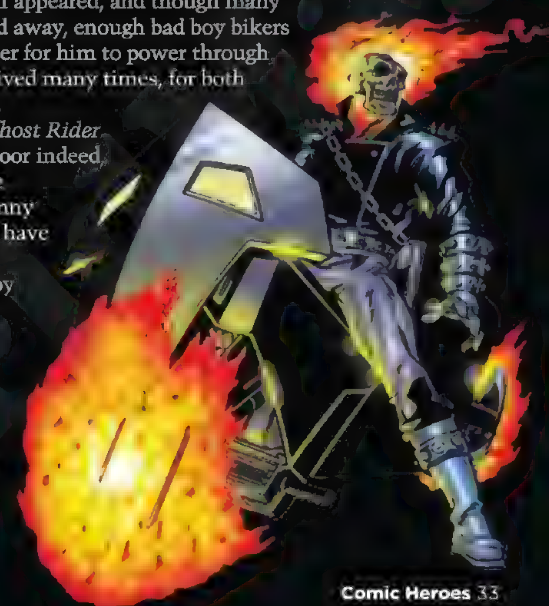


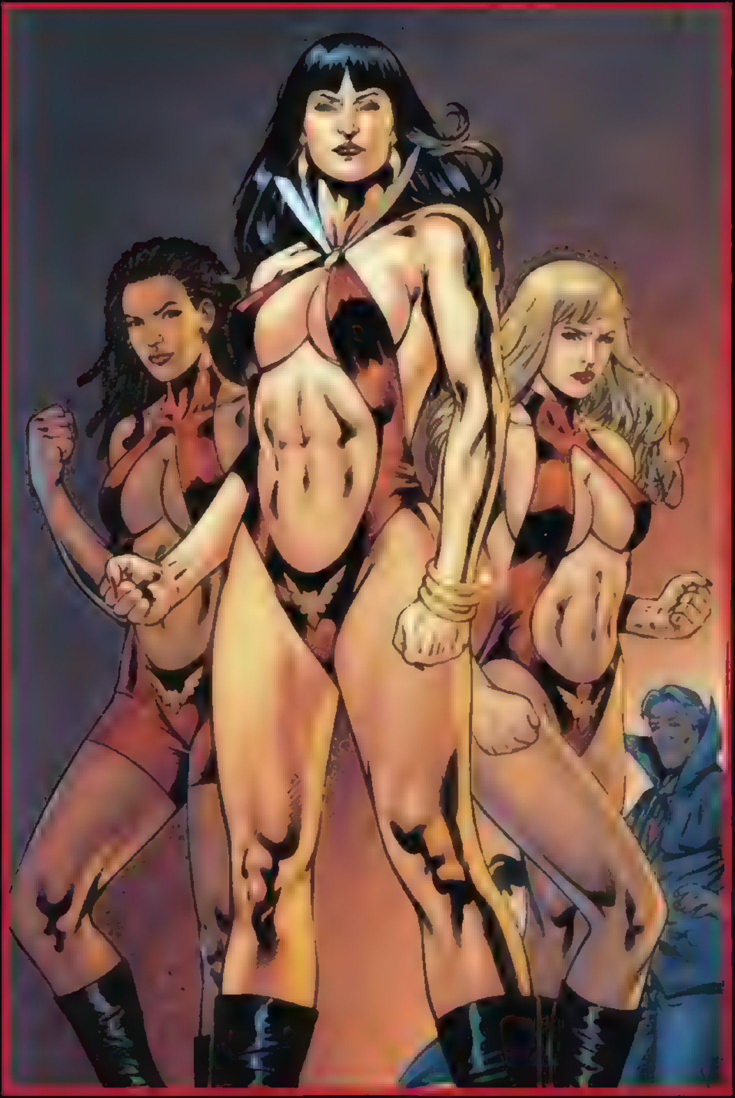
10

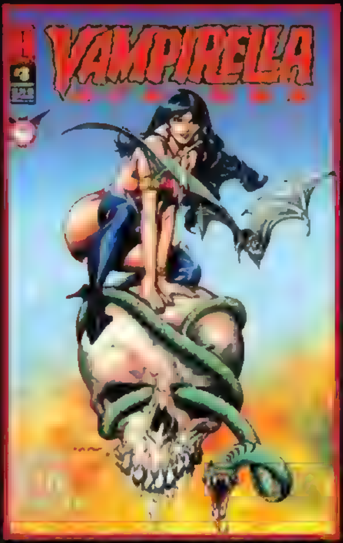
GHOST RIDER

Developed in 1972 by writer Gary Friedrich as a take on the outlaw biker subculture – and boasting a great lead character visual by Mike Ploog, offering a skeletal biker in black leather, with a flaming skull for a head and an outrageous chopper bike – *Ghost Rider* straddled the border between superhero books and the underground comix; it was a tale best read while listening to hard rock, not least for those outrageous sequences where Satan himself appeared, and though many superhero fans shied away, enough bad boy bikers adopted the character for him to power through the '70s, and be revived many times, for both movies and comics.

In truth, many *Ghost Rider* comics have been poor indeed, and the unfortunate bikers – mostly Johnny Blaze, though there have been several others – possessed by this demonic, hellfire-wielding entity, have been weedily drawn indeed. But it hardly matters: the tattoo-friendly visual (once seen, never forgotten) endures.





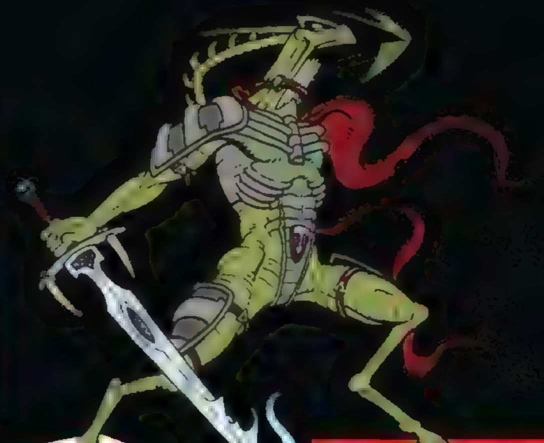


9

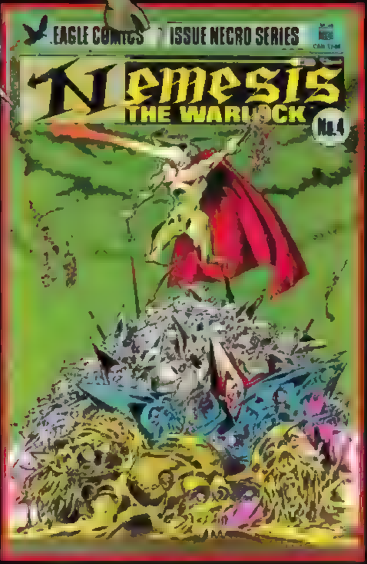
VAMPIRELLA

Sex and horror have always made comfortable bed fellows of course – no room for the psychological implications of that here, thank goodness – but few comic book 'bad girls' have ridden that link in quite so charming a fashion as Vampirella, alien vampire superheroine who acted as hostess (and sometimes star) for oversize black-and-white horror mags from 1969 on, and later enjoyed a second life as a more conventional comic book heroine when Harris Publications (and, later, Dynamite Entertainment) bought the old Warren properties in the early '90s.

Vampirella has enjoyed some strong storylines – writers have included such stars as Mark Millar – and has been well represented by a series of engaging, curvy models (Cathy Christian, notably), but much of her appeal comes from her so-'60s Barbarella-goes-demonic visual, and the work of some amazing Good Girl artists, from Adam Hughes (involved in her Harris relaunch) to the old Warren cover artists, not least Enrich and Frank Frazetta.

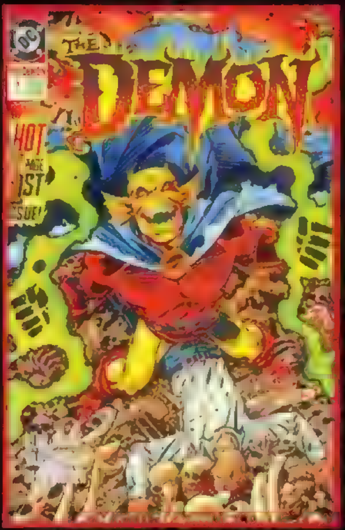


8



NEMESIS THE WARLOCK

2000 AD is packed with monsters, of course – but it's hard to know which should make this list, since many of them are aliens, and as such not monstrous at all in the correct context. In the end we've plumped for Nemesis, handsome, enigmatic, horse-faced champion of oppressed aliens everywhere, a demonic thorn in the side of a well-drawn, fascist future-Earth empire. As drawn by Kevin O'Neill he's a strong contender for the most compellingly nightmarish visual in all of comics; and if he was more truly a monster, he'd be somewhere further up this list.

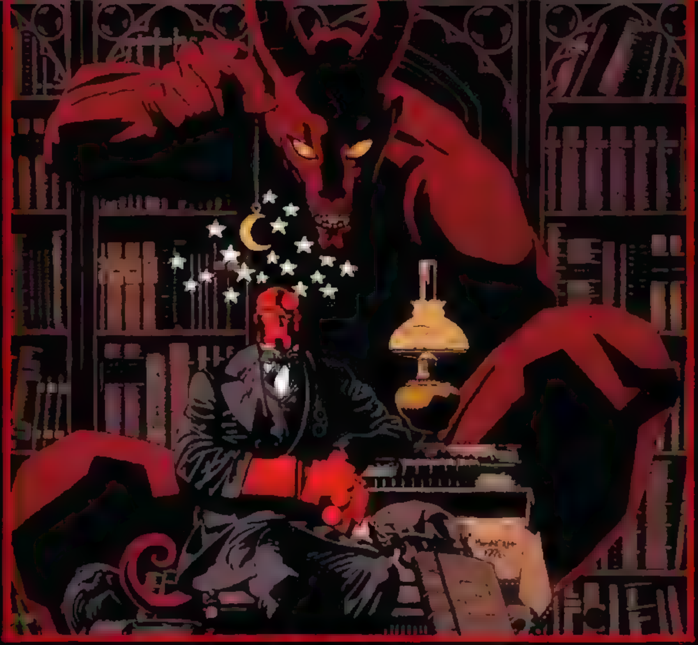


7

THE DEMON

When asked by DC's Carmine Infantino to generate new series more commercial (and less confusing) than his intricate *Fourth World* offerings – books with a single hero, tales that didn't march on for years, and more action-orientated storylines – Jack Kirby sucked back his disappointment. Infantino thought horror was coming back – everybody did at the time – and that a monster should be the lead in one of the new titles; the result was *The Demon*, the tale of occult specialist Jason Blood, transformed into a nigh-ungovernable hell-beast called Etrigan by Merlin's magic. Blood's new alter-ego was on the side of right against dark supernatural forces, but only just.

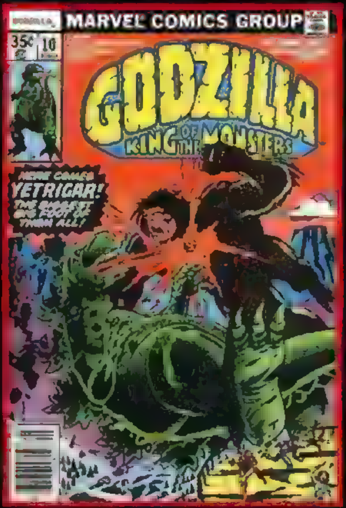
To give Kirby time to write and draw his new books – *Kamandi, The Last Boy On Earth* was the other one – Infantino cancelled the two key *Fourth World* titles, *New Gods* and *Forever People*. Kirby was distraught, but put his all into *The Demon* anyway, which proved fast-moving, intriguing and entertaining – if lacking in big ideas. It lasted 16 issues, but the revivals have kept on coming, most recently in the New 52 title *Demon Knights*.



6

HELLBOY

The most spectacularly successful monster hero of recent years, Mike Mignola's Hellboy – a demon baby brought up on Earth, and trying to do good in the ultimate nature/nurture debate – has been appearing in comics, movies, cartoons and videogames since the early '90s, mostly operating as a sort of government-employed supernatural investigator, though things have got more hairy of late. Part of his success is surely down to his intriguing look, with his red skin, sawn-off horns and huge stone right hand – the sort of creation worthy of Jack Kirby, perhaps, who died around the same time Hellboy first appeared.

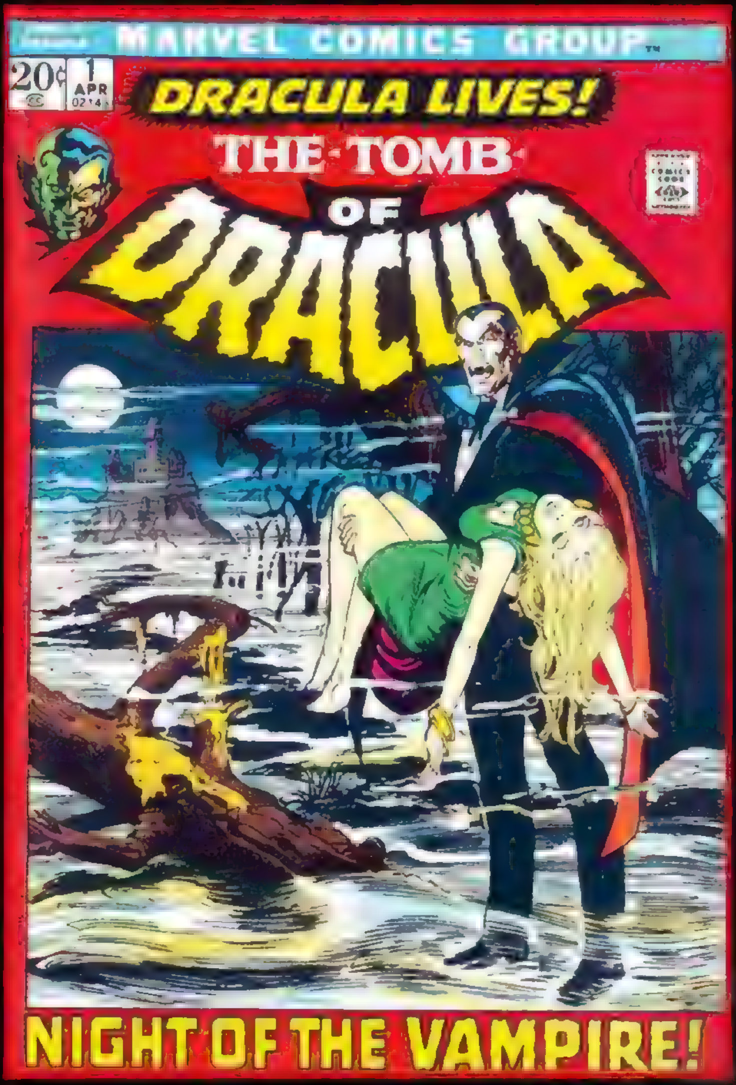


5

GODZILLA

By the mid-'70s, Marvel's new owners at Cadence Industries made moves to stop the rot, cancelling loss-making titles, making sure books never went late, and introducing some commercial-sounding new series. Amongst these: a bunch of movie industry licensing deals, the one with legs – big green scale-covered ones – proving to be Godzilla.

Though he'd appeared in Japanese manga since the '50s, Marvel's take was very different, a 24-issue run that pulled Nippon's goliath into the centre of the Marvel Universe, where he'd fight the Fantastic Four, the Avengers, and especially SHIELD – poor old 'Dum Dum' Dugan being tasked with taking him down. Godzilla would battle other, yet more malevolent beasts during Marvel's *Godzilla, King Of The Monsters* run (the King Kong-like Yetrigar; an anime-style giant robot called Red Ronin), and in subsequent western comic adventures has travelled in time (chiefly during the '90s at Dark Horse) and, at last, fought the classic Toho movie monsters (such as Mothra and Rodan) in assorted ongoing IDW series.



4

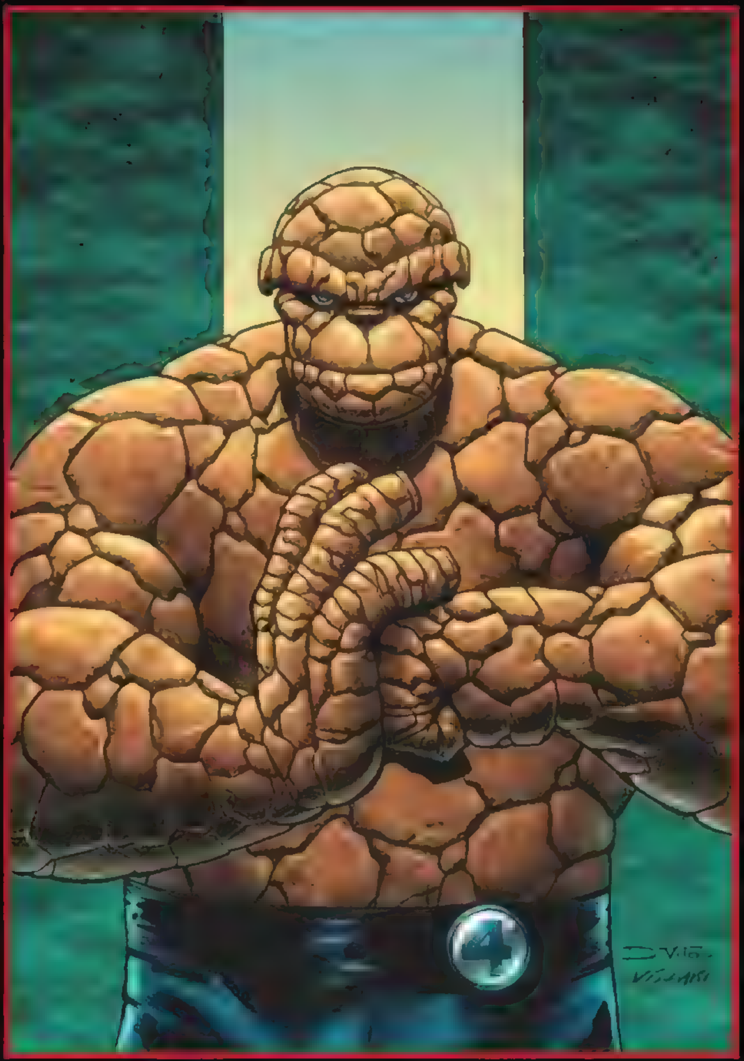
DRACULA

With art by the great Gene Colan, the second of Roy Thomas' new horror titles at early '70s Marvel, *Tomb Of Dracula*, was clearly a prestige project from the start. A horror fan who's campaigned for the job, Colan knew the character had proved box office success at the movies for decades, and convinced Stan Lee to give him the gig with some samples referencing an imposing, noble Jack Palance. His work was sweeping and dramatic, combining the sort of mood and movement he'd brought to books like *Daredevil* with a bit of the *Classics Illustrated* literary respectability that chimed with Thomas. Teamed with Tom Palmer – perhaps the best inker of the age, who gave extra focus and solidity to Colan's fluid, often slantwise imagery – it was striking stuff, notable for introducing the use of Zip-A-Tone to mainstream comics, and added a supporting cast to chase, harass and occasionally support the book's evil, charismatic lead.

Suffering from musical writers for early issues, by #7 Marv Wolfman was on board and would stick around, doing career-best work as he started to concentrate on the supporting cast – people chasing after Dracula, or who'd lost a loved one to him – which grew and grew, different people wandering in and out of the story in complex patterns; amongst the most memorable were Hannibal King, a vampire working as a private eye who tries his best to destroy his own kind, and Blade, a black, street-talking vampire slayer.

When Dracula himself did appear, he was more well-rounded than before; proud, with his own moral code, mixed feelings about his past and status, and complex motivations, including love for his son Janus and hatred of his daughter, Lilith. Though subplots would be left dangling too long sometimes – over a year was not unusual – and much was resolved 'off camera', *Tomb Of Dracula* became one of the most sophisticated, adult adventure comics of its time, and in Dracula himself here was finally a new protagonist with the weird charisma of a Magneto or Doctor Doom.

New readers were often baffled by what was going on, though they rarely failed to be intrigued, but the fans were vocal and enthusiastic. It's probably not over-stating things to say that many would have abandoned comics altogether if not for this one solid, consistent title.



3

THE THING

Tatty old Timely, Martin Goodman's rag-tag comic book company, had lurched from crisis to crisis during the '40s and '50s; the big early hits had been angry, violent superpowered anti-heroes like the Sub-Mariner and the original Human Torch, but by the late '50s they were specialising in Westerns and horror comics, often about gigantic, blocky, often rocky-looking monsters with names like Xom terrorising tiny, ant-like people. Mostly created by artist extraordinaire Jack Kirby, these were short sappy tales, with little real substance but a certain grotesque power, but DC – the undisputed daddy of the industry at the time – was suddenly doing well again with its colourful superheroes, and someone (Kirby or writer/editor Stanley Lieber/'Stan Lee', or likely some combination of the two) came up with an idea for a rival superhero strip that would play to Timely's strengths.

Mixing elements of Kirby's old DC strip *Challengers Of The Unknown*, about a team of explorers into the bizarre, with a love of Frankenstein's tragic monster, the *Fantastic Four* was a bold new take on the superhero team that was both more human – the four leads are a bizarre family of sorts, with soap opera problems – and more horrific and monstrous than virtually any superhero strip that had come before. And the break-out star was the most monstrous character of the lot, a cocky, rough-edge fighter pilot-cum-astronaut called Ben Grimm, now transformed into an angry orange rock-monster, one of Kirby's giants from the old monster mags squeezed down to vaguely human size.

Now known as the Thing, Grimm struggles with his lost humanity, forever fighting depression and bitterness as he works, however clumsily, with his team-mates to keep the world safe. The Thing was the first major figure of the new 'Marvel Age' of comics, and introduced the idea of the monster as hero – and he's still, in many ways, the heart and soul of the Marvel Universe. Because of The Thing, the idea of an ugly hero suddenly seemed a very appealing one. Indeed, few on this list would be here without him.

2

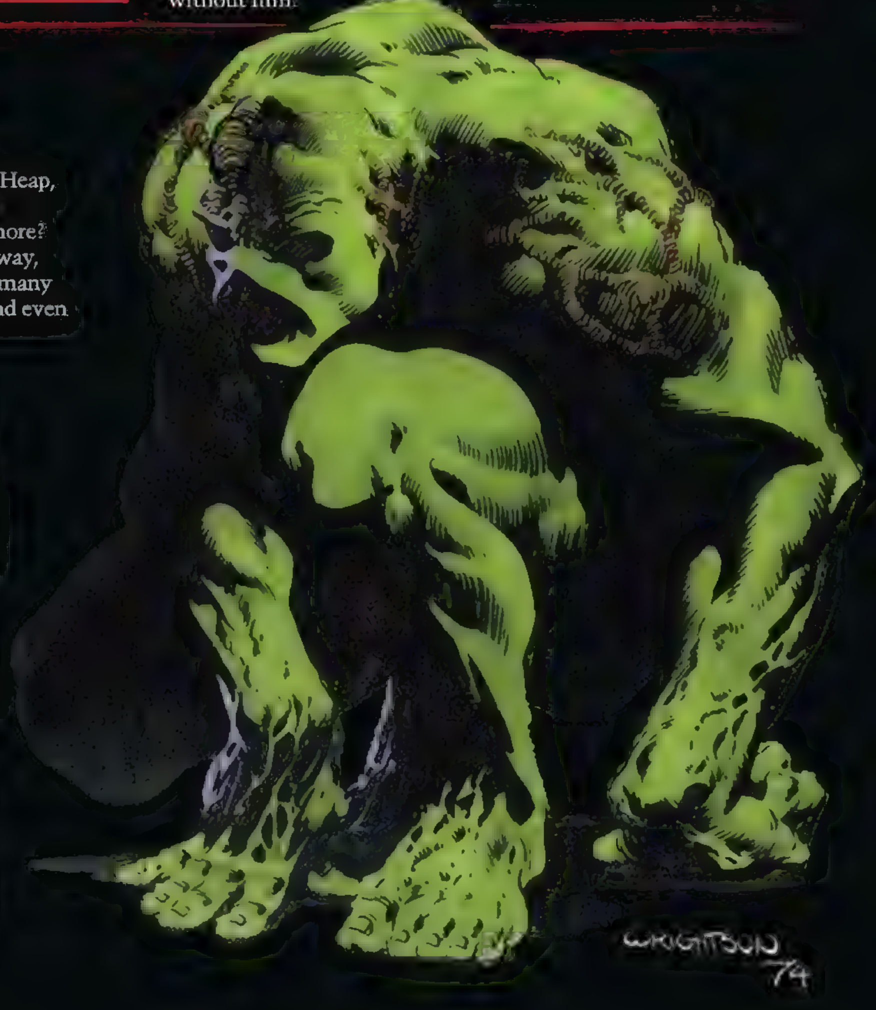
SWAMP THING

Within months of the debut of Marvel's Man-Thing, DC came up with its own muck-monster, another variation on The Heap, this one produced by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson. Coincidence? Or something more? (Certainly, Wein and Marvel's Gerry Conway, creator of Man-Thing, were friends – and many creators of the time used to chat about, and even help out with, each other's projects.)

But though there were obvious similarities between the two new 'heroes', the differences were more intriguing – and Swamp Thing had the shadowy, gothic feel that DC liked, giving the strip a very different feel to the generally more bouncy poignancy of Marvel horror. And what Swamp Thing had going for him from the off was a less bizarre, more expressive visual – you could see the face of a man in there, however misshapen – and the power of speech too, giving us a way into this similarly transformed scientist's tortured mind.

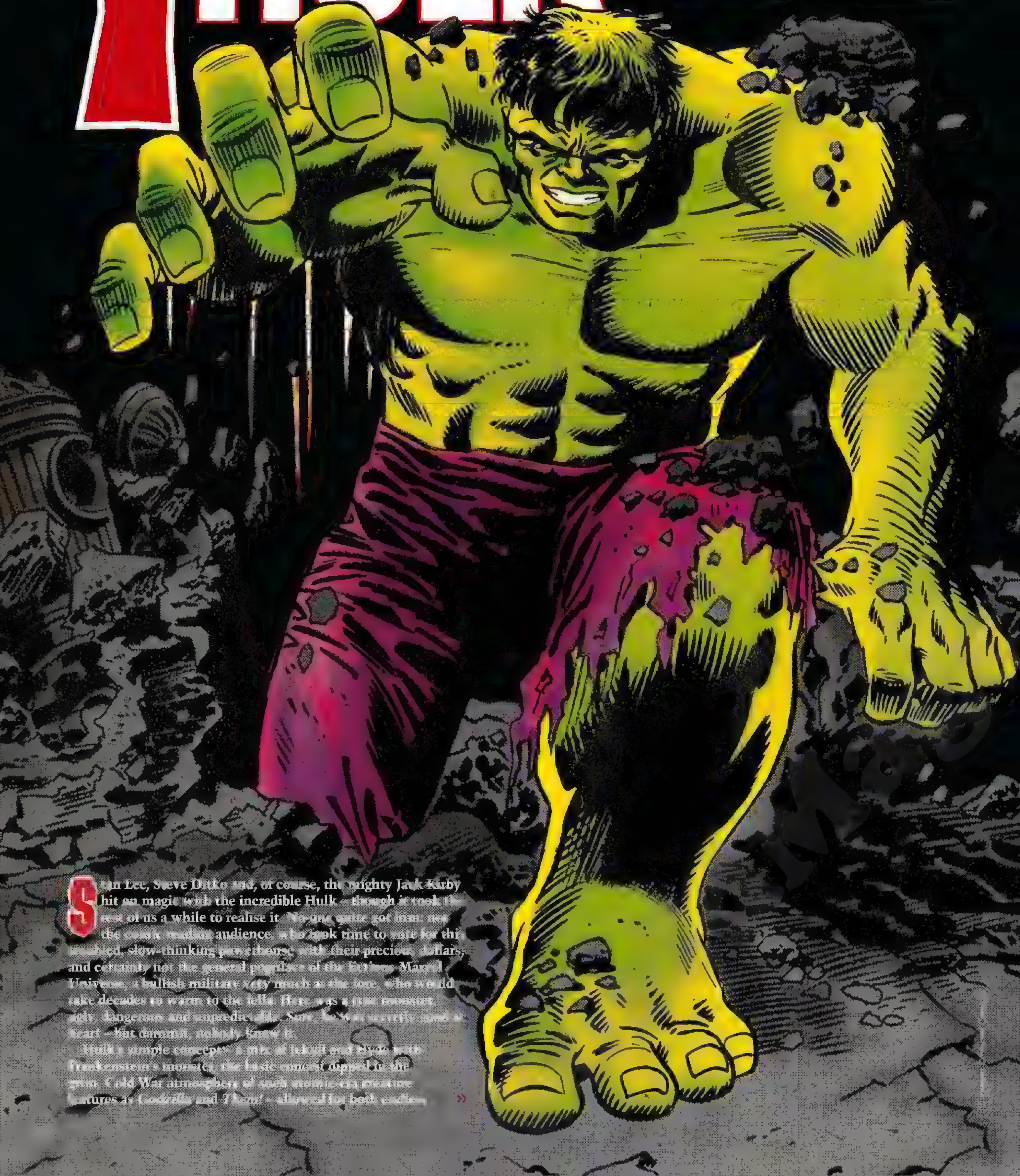
Best of all, though were the visuals of Wrightson, who channelled classical 19th century fantasy illustrators; one of the comics' most talented draftsmen, he got mood like few others, and his swamp was a rotting, fertile place. Though the creators' run on the strip barely got into double figures in terms of episodes, it was memorable, florid and unsettling – but then Wrightson was off, unable to make his deadlines, for the more forgiving world of book illustration, and succeeding artists lacked his drama.

Of course, in the '80s there would be a revival, and *Swamp Thing* would become one of the best, most dynamic comic books of all time. You can read about *that* on page 82 in this issue.



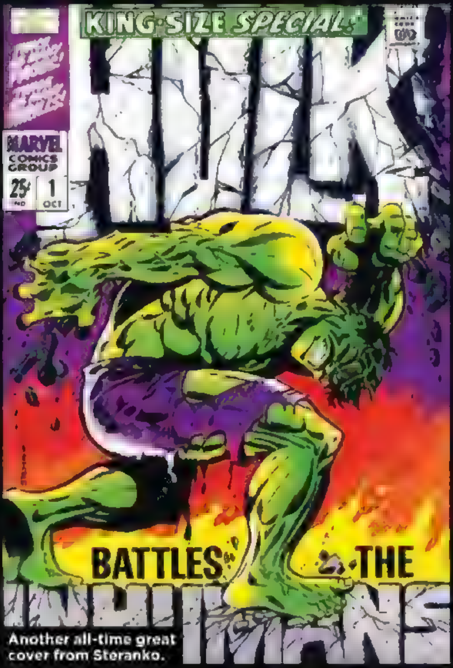
1 HULK

He's 'the strongest there is', as he never tires of telling us. There's no more compelling monstrosity in comics… **By Matt Bielby**

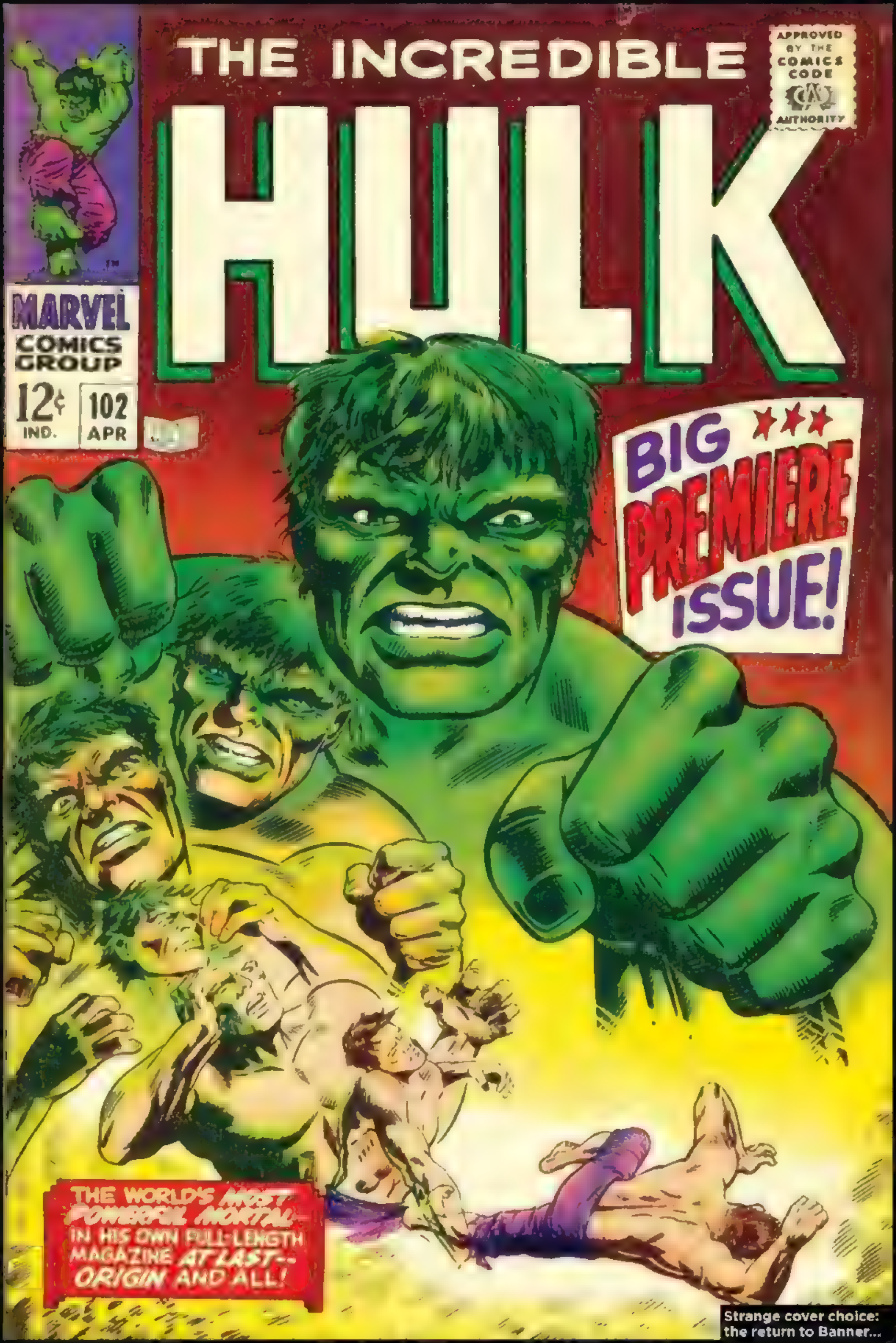


Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and, of course, the mighty Jack Kirby hit on magic with the incredible Hulk – though it took the rest of us a while to realise it. No-one quite got him: not the comic-reading audience, who took time to vote for this troubled, slow-thinking powerhouse with their precious dollars; and certainly not the general populace of the fictional Marvel Universe, a bullish military very much at the fore, who would take decades to warm to the fella. Here was a true monster, ugly, dangerous and unpredictable. Sure, he was secretly good at heart – but dammit, nobody knew it.

Hulk's simple concept – a mix of Jekyll and Hyde with Frankenstein's monster, the basic concept dipped in the grim Cold War atmosphere of such atomic-era creature features as *Godzilla* and *Them!* – allowed for both endless »



Another all-time great cover from Steranko.


THE INCREDIBLE HULK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ IND. 102 APR
BIG PREMIERE ISSUE!
THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL MORTAL IN HIS OWN FULL-LENGTH MAGAZINE AT LAST-- ORIGIN AND ALL!

Strange cover choice: the return to Banner...

action-orientated destruction, and deep psychological exploration; it also lent itself to a touching sentimentality that flirted with the mawkish, but rarely crossed the line. Lacking self control, a stable persona, even loyalty to conventional morality, Hulk was unlike any other Marvel hero, and blurred the conventional monster-on-the-loose tale with the core superhero fantasy to thrilling effect.

Looked at one way, raging Hulk was the dark side of the Superman myth. There, Superman was the true personality, the stage buffoon and milksop Clark Kent merely a disguise he adopted. With Hulk, a real-life Clark – weedy but arrogant scientist Bruce Banner – becomes Superman-strong through a failed experiment and a rare moment of altruism, but now he can't control it.

The idea rang true because we know that deep within all of us lurk hidden strength and anger both, powers with the ability to destroy ourselves and those around us, as well as – perhaps, and in rare circumstance – save us too. Hulk forever exhibits the toddler tantrum urge to destroy, but he's the luckiest monster alive – for his frustrations rarely kill the innocent (a miracle of Marvel logic this, but we have to go with it, except where evidence says conclusively otherwise), though they've put paid to the schemings of brainiac despots and alien invasions time after time.

GOING NUCLEAR

Though the Banner we first meet in Hulk is a less than sympathetic figure – high-handed and irresponsible, the skinny, introverted creator of a 'gamma bomb' – we grow to feel for him, brought low by the unpredictability of the green-skinned, essentially blue-collar brute within. As first presented in the first Lee/Kirby tales, the G-bomb is a legitimate, even heroic, creation of the Cold War struggle – but we read it very differently now.

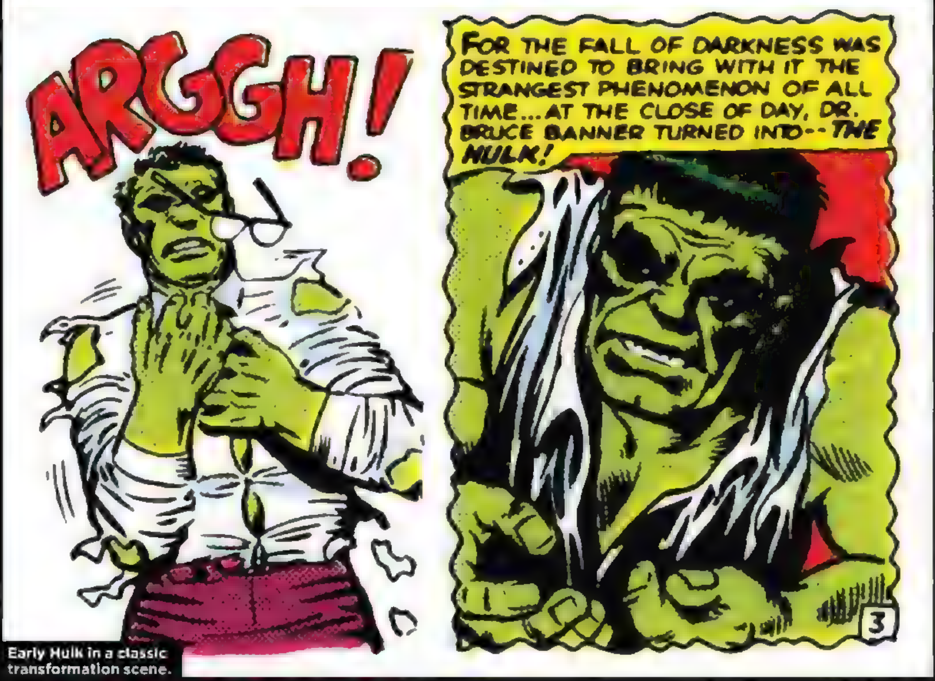
Banner's a youngish hotshot, conducting desert tests in New Mexico or somesuch under the control of a powerful father figure, Air Force General Thaddeus E 'Thunderbolt' Ross, short-tempered and bluff. There's potential love here too: Ross' quiet, sheltered daughter, Betty, is attracted to the young science-meddler. We can't see why, of course, but part of Betty's tragedy is that the guy she falls for – the polar opposite of her macho father – will soon demonstrate a rage to make Thunderbolt's look like a roman candle.

Though he's helped along by a Soviet spy embedded in the gamma program – a lab tech called Igor, an outrageous case of hiding in plain sight – it's naturally Banner's haughty hubris that proves the source of his real downfall. Bruce resents the sort of strength represented by Ross, but worships his own creativity – and who cares if the weapon he's created is both hugely destructive and highly unstable? It proves his brilliance.

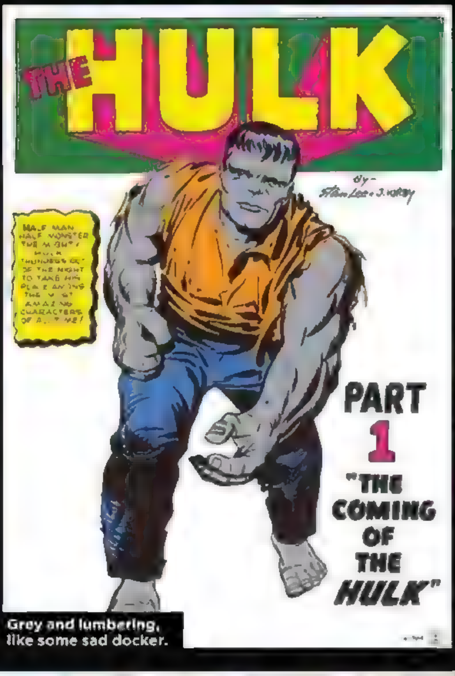
So yes, he gets exactly what he was asking for when caught on the edge of the explosion himself, but at the same time we feel for him. After all, he was only there because a hot-rodding kid had wandered onto the test site. Banner is utterly irradiated and should die, but doesn't – though often, later, he will wish that he had. Like the tragic star of some '50s SF horror film, it begins a grisly change within him, a long-winded fate worse than death.

Though the earliest Modern Marvel tales were dominated by Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four, much of their energy actually came from the striking new antagonists both strips threw up – Doctors Doom and Octopus made the early running – and by the vexed fury of the ever-growing Marvel U's twin anti-heroes. One of these was Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, and the other was the Hulk, who rocked up every other month in one book or another, always trashing things, grappling

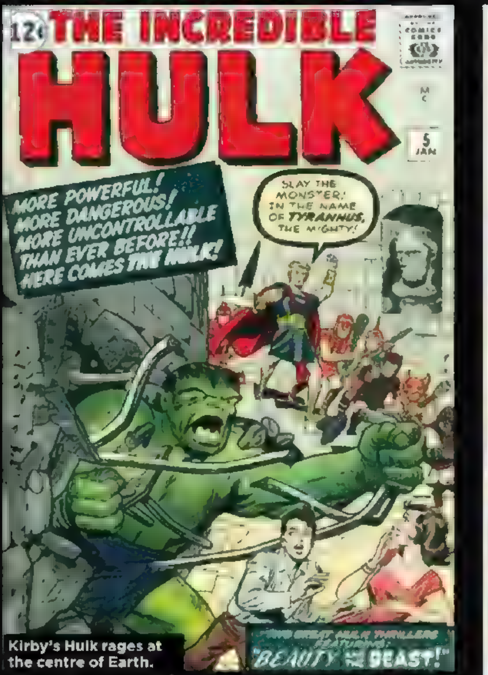
> **“He gets exactly what he was asking for, but at the same time, we feel for him”**


ARGGH!
FOR THE FALL OF DARKNESS WAS DESTINED TO BRING WITH IT THE STRANGEST PHENOMENON OF ALL TIME... AT THE CLOSE OF DAY, DR. BRUCE BANNER TURNED INTO-- THE HULK!
3

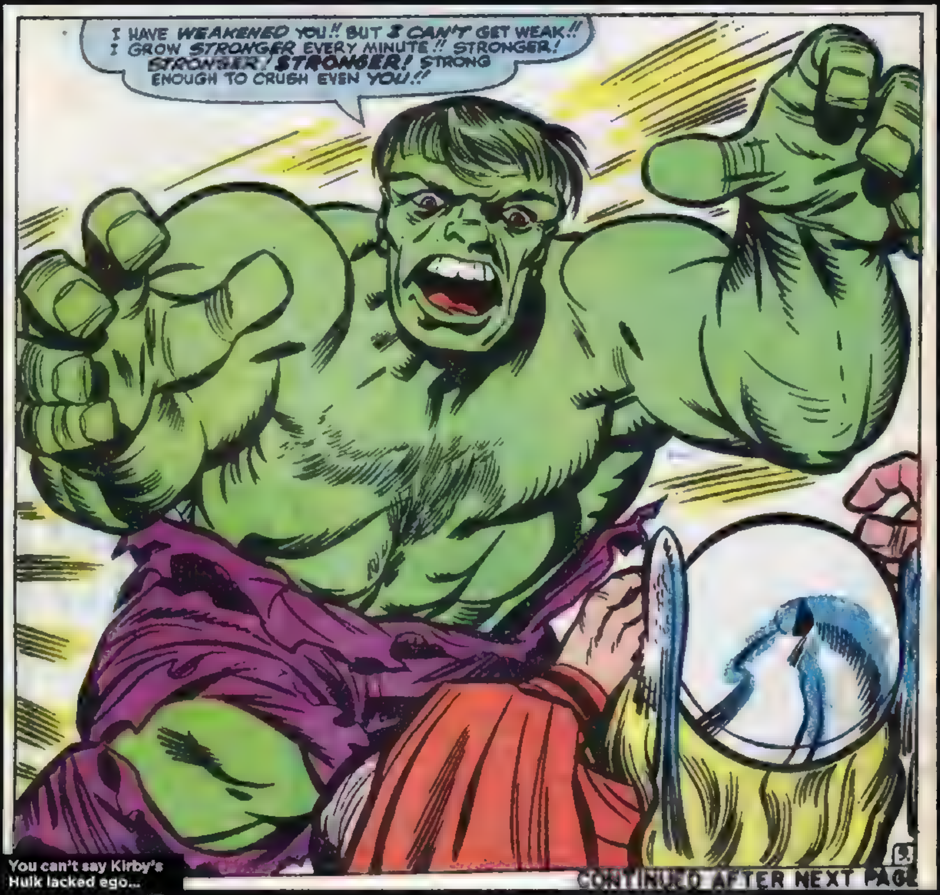
Early Hulk in a classic transformation scene.


THE HULK
By- Stan Lee • J. Kirby
PART 1
"THE COMING OF THE HULK"

Grey and lumbering, like some sad docker.


12¢ THE INCREDIBLE HULK
5 JAN
MORE POWERFUL! MORE DANGEROUS! MORE UNCONTROLLABLE THAN EVER BEFORE!! HERE COMES THE HULK!
SLAY THE MONSTER! IN THE NAME OF TYRANNUS, THE MIGHTY!
"BEAUTY AND THE BEAST!"

Kirby's Hulk rages at the centre of Earth.


I HAVE WEAKENED YOU!! BUT I CAN'T GET WEAK!! I GROW STRONGER EVERY MINUTE!! STRONGER! STRONGER! STRONGER! STRONG ENOUGH TO CRUSH EVEN YOU!!
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

You can't say Kirby's Hulk lacked ego...

with the hero, but full of crotchety insistence that all would be fine if they'd just learn to leave him alone.

Neither, it seemed at first, could quite carry their own book, but they made for brilliant, semi-sympathetic opposition in just about everyone else's. Namor added the intriguing spectre of sexual rivalry, but Hulk was the mightier beast, and had an amazingly persistent following. 'Bring back the Hulk!' shouted the letters each time he showed his glaring emerald mug, and soon Lee chucked the Green Goliath in *Tales To Astonish* as back-up feature. This was late 1964, and Hulk would get his second stab at stardom.

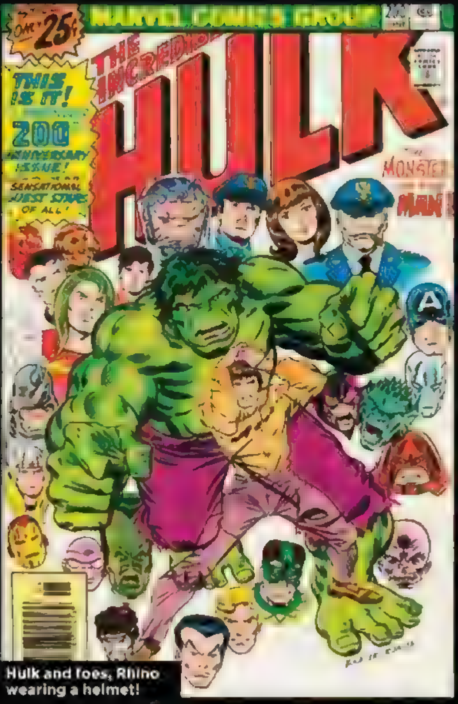
JEKYLL & HYDE

But what of Hulk's first run? This had been in his own title from 1962-63, by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and it had lasted just six issues. Kirby's initial version of the monster was clearly influenced by Boris Karloff's look in the 1931 horror classic *Frankenstein*, and by the Jewish golem figure too, while the basic plot was an obvious spin on Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, *Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde*.

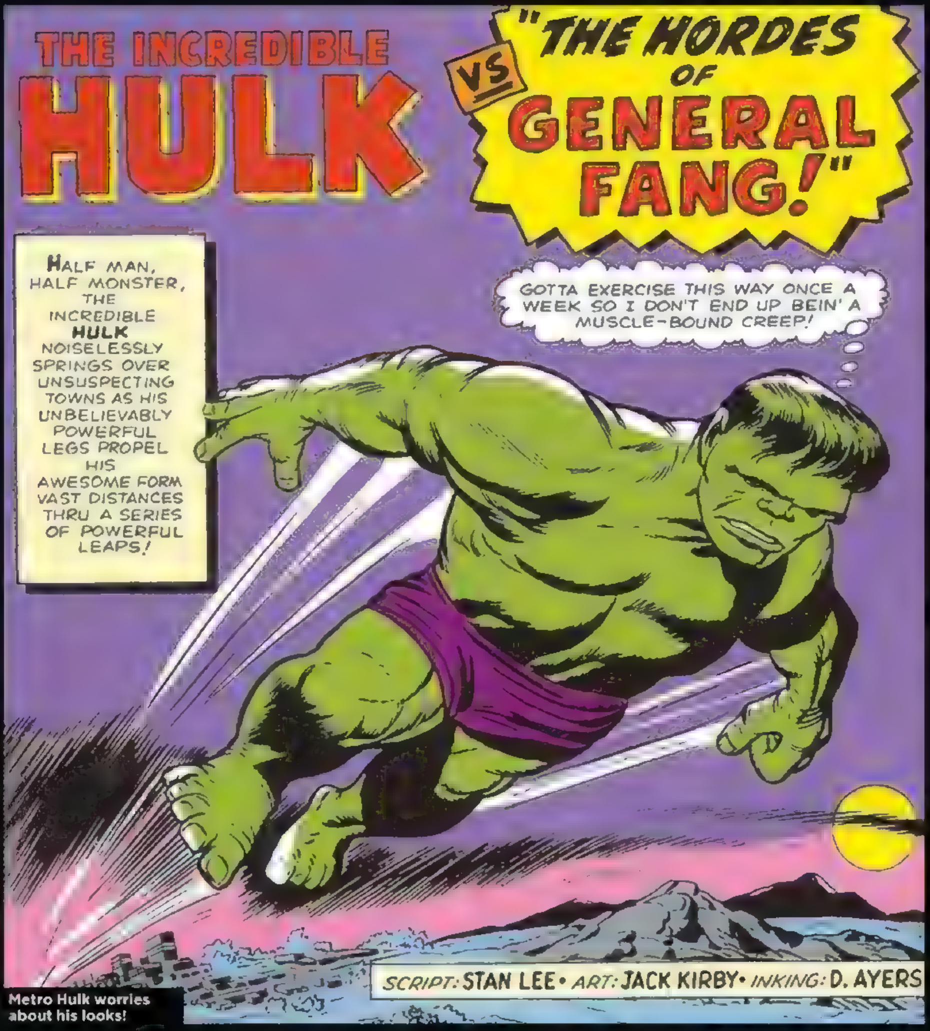
These are spartan, rudimentary tales on the whole, but there's a crude power to Hulk's origin, and his relationship with the rescued lad, Rick Jones, becomes quite touching. There'd been something there alright, but it hadn't quite gelled. So what to do? For his second stab at the character, Lee pulled an inspired substitution – instead of Jack Kirby, Hulk's co-creator and the obvious choice for this giant strongman, he went for the oddball, withdrawn Steve Ditko instead.

Madness? Some thought so. But it proved to be revelatory. Ditko had filled in for Kirby on the last issue of *Hulk*'s initial run, but now he offered up a different version, pushing to centre stage the tragedy and the Frankenstein parallels. Ditko's Hulk had haunted eyes, and something of the zombie to him; like Spider-Man, he sat at the centre of a swirling web of supporting characters with their own soapy subplots and motivations.

Of course, Thunderbolt Ross and the US Army remained central antagonists, but behind them sat a more mysterious figure – a second gamma-powered monster called the Leader, but this one is not a cerebral brainbox reduced to lumbering beast by the radiation, but rather an everyday manual worker now gifted with a mighty superbrain. With only half a comic to service every month,


25¢
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
THIS IS IT!
200 ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!
SENSATIONAL GUEST STARS OF ALL!
MONSTER MAN!

Hulk and foes, Rhino wearing a helmet!


THE INCREDIBLE HULK
VS
"THE HORDES OF GENERAL FANG!"
HALF MAN, HALF MONSTER, THE INCREDIBLE HULK NOISELESSLY SPRINGS OVER UNSUSPECTING TOWNS AS HIS UNBELIEVABLY POWERFUL LEGS PROPEL HIS AWESOME FORM VAST DISTANCES THRU A SERIES OF POWERFUL LEAPS!
GOTTA EXERCISE THIS WAY ONCE A WEEK SO I DON'T END UP BEIN' A MUSCLE-BOUND CREEP!
SCRIPT: STAN LEE • ART: JACK KIRBY • INKING: D. AYERS

Metro Hulk worries about his looks!

Ditko was forced to keep his plates spinning even faster than he did on *Spider-Man*, and with a cliffhanger at each episode's end the momentum kept building. These stories never really ended as such, just tumbled from crisis to crisis like a rollercoaster.

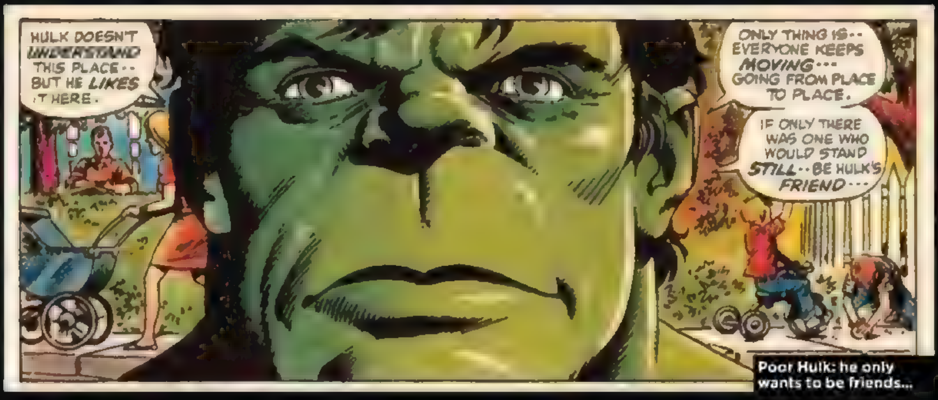
It was breathless, powerful stuff, and Hulk started to dominate *Tales To Astonish* – but it was over in less than a year. From #68 (June 1965) Kirby was back, and everything changed. Instead of rags – Ditko always drew the remains of a shirt on his creature, making him more human, somehow – this Hulk wore trunks, like a wrestler.

The adventures got bigger – memorably, Hulk would journey to the Earth's core – with most of the supporting cast left far behind; it was typical Kirby invention, and Lee, as so often, would battle to keep up. One particular reader frustration: Hulk's intelligence level and base personality would bounce all over the place. Was he crafty, but sour and antisocial – as in most of the Ditko stories? Or an angry Kirby bruiser? Lee even toyed with Hulk retaining all of Banner's faculties, but slowly a new persona emerged: pouting, isolated, a man-child. This one stuck.

Suddenly, because we felt genuinely sorry for the poor dumb Hulk and his unfortunate situation – the military hounding him, Hulk always failing to grasp quite why – the strip became more of a weepy. The more Lee and a now-returned Kirby made it impossible for Hulk to ever find peace, the stronger the stories became – and the greatest of them neatly seesawed between sadness and untamed destruction, Hulk weeping in frustration after he's just smashed each new, thin chance for peace to smithereens. The creative musical chairs would begin again – Kirby and Bill Everett, who'd started drawing over his breakdowns, left after six or so issues – but Hulk's essential nature was now set.

He'd only been around for four years, but he'd been through more ups and down than just about any other hero. And life wasn't about to get any easier for the poor old incredible Hulk.

> **“The more impossible it got for Hulk to ever find peace, the stronger the stories became”**


HULK DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THIS PLACE-- BUT HE LIKES IT THERE.
ONLY THING IS-- EVERYONE KEEPS MOVING--- GOING FROM PLACE TO PLACE.
IF ONLY THERE WAS ONE WHO WOULD STAND STILL-- BE HULK'S FRIEND---

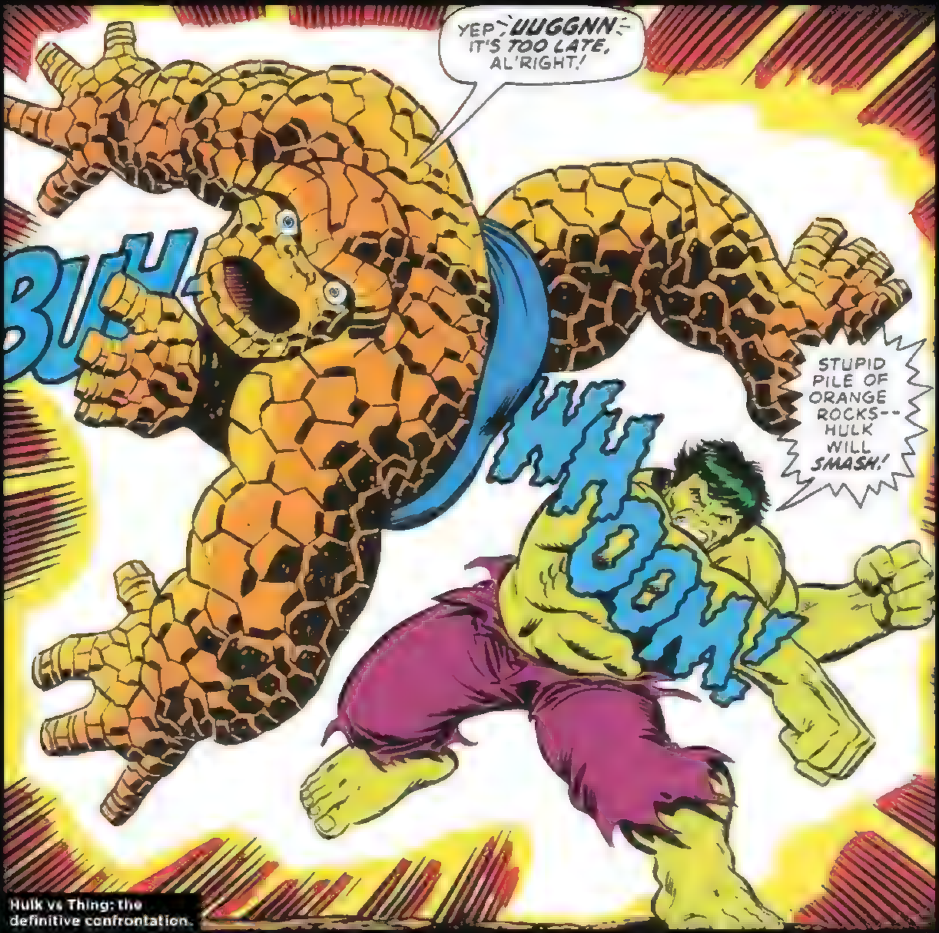
Poor Hulk: he only wants to be friends...

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

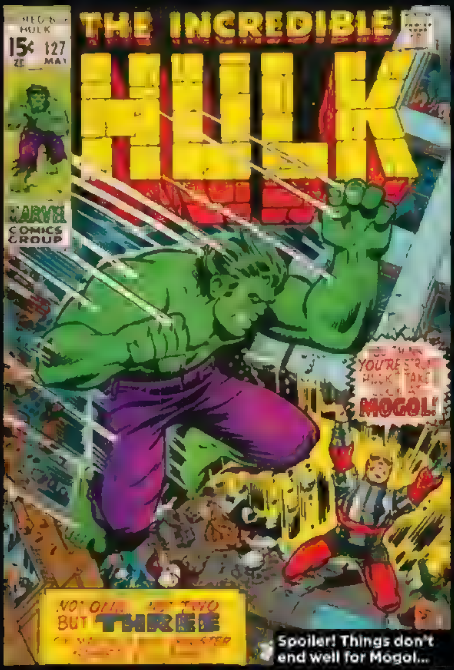
Tales To Astonish became the second series of *Incredible Hulk* in 1968, and slowly formula set in. Many issues, Thunderbolt Ross would send some new battalion or agent to destroy the Hulk, while a beauty-and-the-beast relationship between Bruce and Betty bubbled away in the background. Now, with Hulk stripped of his malevolent nature – but not his in-built violence – he became increasingly our protector, sometimes unwittingly, against threats from outside. The Leader remained a constant, but now we got the Abomination, another gamma-powered monster, too.

When the Leader showed up we got Hulk's honest aggression pitted against Tefal-head's haughty disdain, while with the Abomination (a communist spy turned into a monster yet uglier and stronger than Hulk, but retaining his normal intelligence) it was the Hulk's relentless heart that came into play. As with Rocky battling some larger bruiser, it was his endless reserves of determination that would enable him to win.

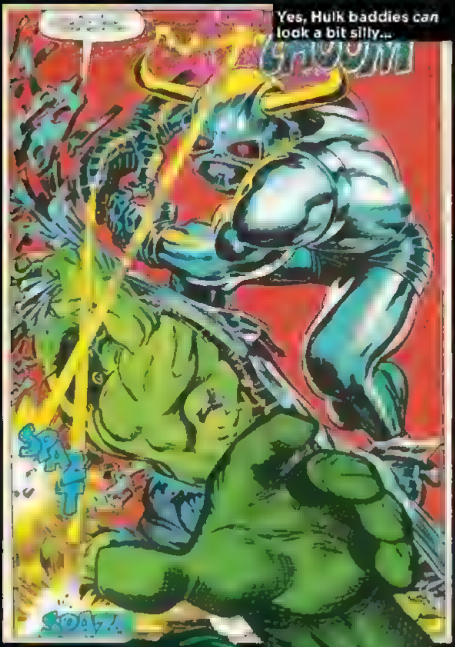
For the next few years, Hulk became the perfect venue for some of Lee's most potent stuff on our unfair world and the wrath it can provoke, with a mix of pencillers – John Buscema, Gil Kane – bringing the ruination and pitifulness, until John Severin's sister, Marie, settled in as regular artist. A rare


YEP~UUGGNN~ IT'S TOO LATE, AL'RIGHT!
BUH-
WHOOM!
STUPID PILE OF ORANGE ROCKS-- HULK WILL SMASH!

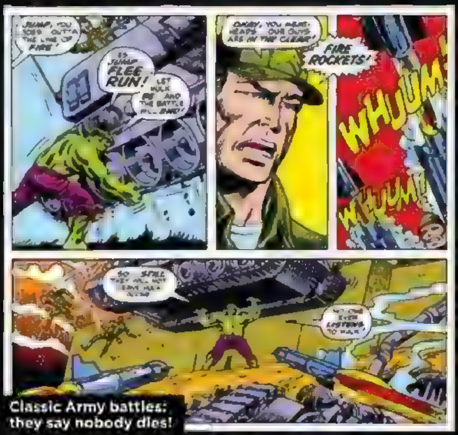
Hulk vs Thing: the definitive confrontation.



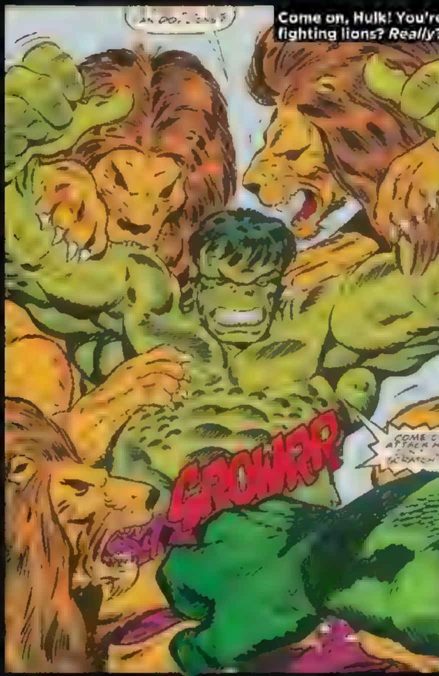
Spoiler! Things don't end well for Mogol...



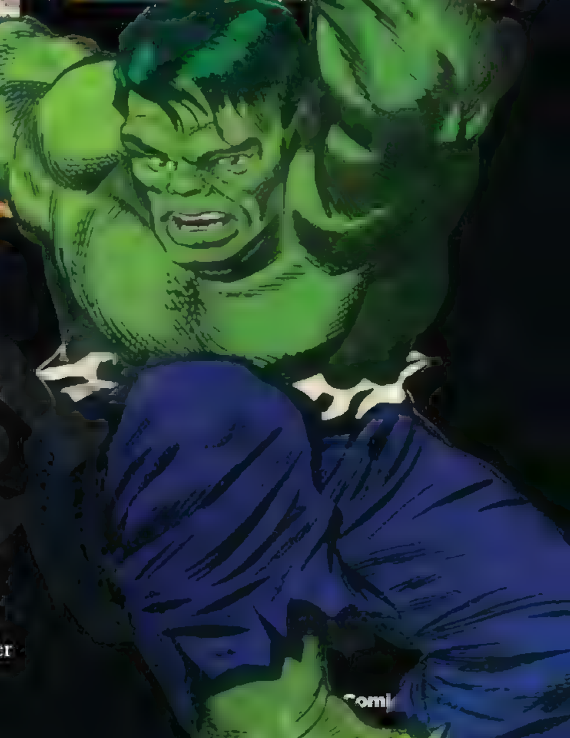
Yes, Hulk baddies *can* look a bit silly...


FLEE RUN!
FIRE ROCKETS!
WHUUM
WHUUM

Classic Army battles: they say nobody dies!



Come on, Hulk! You're fighting lions? *Really*?



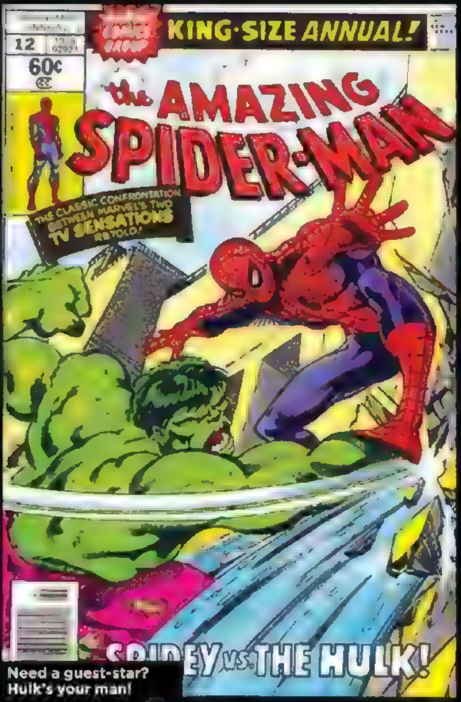
female superhero creator, then and now, she offered up a Hulk that was something of bulky victim, less savage and more tragic than before; her inker, a young guy called Herb Trimpe, brought a likeable cartoony quality to the thing, and would eventually take over to become one of the definitive Hulk artists. We talk to him elsewhere this issue.

WAITING TO EXPLODE

Trimpe is a very distinctive stylist, somewhat love-him-or-hate him, but he proved perfect for Hulk, and there's a dark spectacle to much of his run, this innocent – a now entirely sympathetic Banner, pushed from pillar to post – getting himself embroiled in the machinations of some new lunatic each issue. It might be rebellion in Atlantis, or war at the centre of the earth with Tyrannus and the Mole Man, but wherever Banner rocked up it would be only pages before the ticking time-bomb that is the inevitable Hulk-out.

These were stories heaving with super-monsters – an endless array of them, all as strong or stronger than our boy – but few of them would ever be seen again. Hulk would hammer them, whatever their twist or gimmick, through a combination of big heart, endless anger and dumb luck. (Only occasionally would some tiny bit of Banner, lost deep in the raging beast, figure out some smart way out of the situation – using his brains, and an excess of electricity, to defeat the Glob, for instance.)

And this Hulk was merciless, his own worst enemy. When he befriends a warrior called Mogul, he feels betrayed to learn he's only a robot, smashing his new buddy – who refuses to raise an arm against him – to bits, until only a voicebox is left. Hulk then crushes this too, and as it crumbles to powder


KING-SIZE ANNUAL!
12
60¢
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
THE CLASSIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MARVEL'S TWO TV SENSATIONS RETOLD!
SPIDEY VS. THE HULK!

Need a guest-star? Hulk's your man!

Hulk's looks of anguish are rightly legendary...

a thin, broken farewell comes out: "I am your friend, Hulk… your only friennnn…"

Another time, when attacked by a warship, he drags it to the depths by its keel, murdering the hundreds on board – and making a mockery of any retro-fitted claims that Hulk never kills. In fact, though hardly a cold-blooded murderer, his body count is surely in the thousands, with considerable numbers decidedly non-accidental.

Trimpe brought power, and memorable action sequences to much of what he did – an undersea fight between Hulk and Sub-Mariner in #118, for instance, is rammed with powerful panels – but could do the quiet stuff too, and it's some of the gentle Hulk scenes that have stuck with readers the most. (A moment where Hulk pets a deer was especially memorable.)

Trimpe gets little credit for his innovative storytelling either – a cutaway of a hospital wall, the bricks on different floors removed to reveal various conversations, was almost Eisner – and he often drew thin little panels to show how trapped a pre-transformation Banner feels.

Hulk vs Logan: the ending is inevitable...

Of course, as with the later TV show, the highlight of many a Hulk tale would be the moment Banner finally gives in to the beast within. When the Glob, a silent muck-monster in The Heap tradition, smashes Banner's sewer-raft, guess who rises from the slurry to challenge him? Later, Hulk interrupts a picnic, and falls asleep listening to music from an abandoned radio – The Carpenters, we imagine – to awake as someone smaller, pinker and yet more sad.

Roy Thomas often brought his poetry-quoting, so potent in the *Avengers*, to the party here too: at one point he has the Hulk crawl out of the seas to collapse and change on the beach to a soundtrack of 'The Sorrow Of Love' by WB Yeats.

TEENAGE ANGST

And it's the relationship between the man and the beast within that has most consistently excited and thrilled his handlers. Not that everyone agrees on exactly what *that* should be: Doug Moench thought one thing, Roger Stern another. Eventually Bill Mantlo would attempt to define things in 1985: now a pre-teen Bruce was shown being beaten up by a violent father, who would eventually kill his mother. This, the suggestion was, had set our hero along his path from the very early days: his emotions all bottled up, anger turned inwards, and a deep-seated hatred of father figures like Ross bubbling away in the background. All the gamma bomb actually did, suggested Mantlo, was create the physical manifestation of a psychological trauma that had always been there.

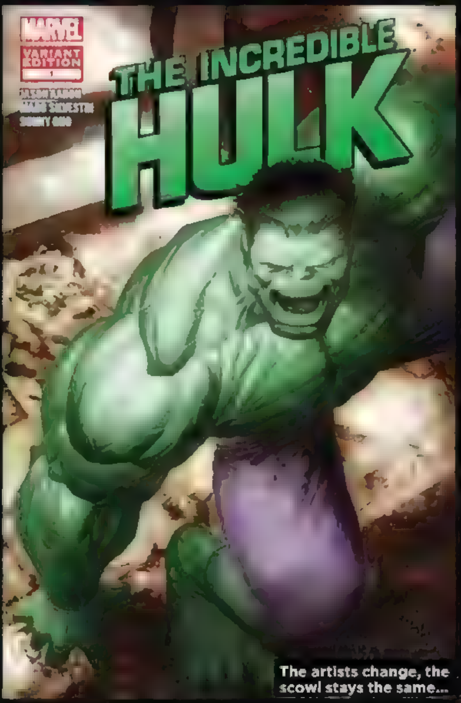
The other thing that's got writers excited is change-of-status stories: what if Hulk was clever, or a separate being to Banner, or red, or – dunno – maybe a gladiator in space?

First, Roy Thomas would split man and beast into beings for a single storyline in the '70s; then John Byrne would do the same for longer – at the same time bigging up poor Betty Ross, forever being pulled every which way, until she briefly becomes the series' true protagonist. Later, funny, smart Peter David would mount a sustained, and highly entertaining, examination of Banner's psychological state, suggesting there may actually be three personalities locked in there somewhere: basic Bruce, messed up but functioning; grey Hulk, smart but psychopathic; and good old green-skinned Hulk, the angry child.

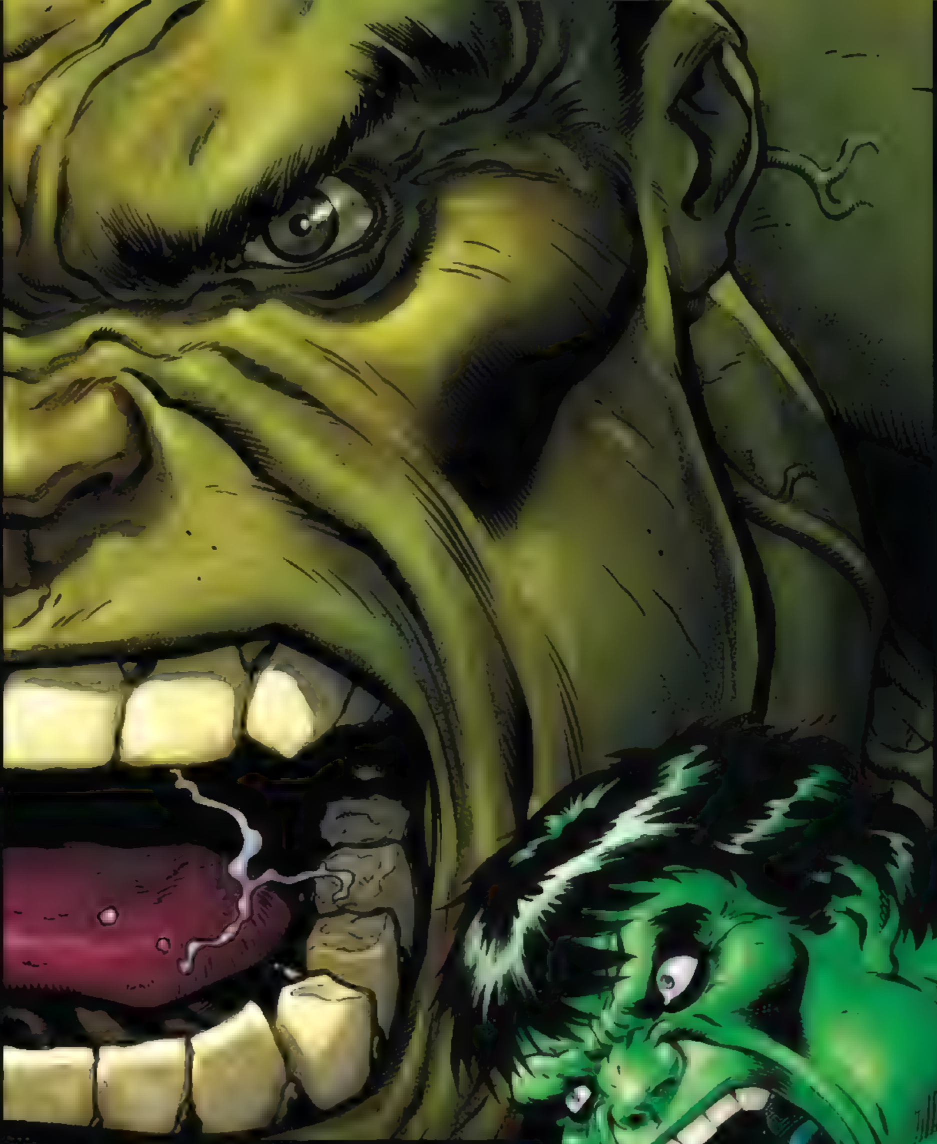
For a while there, Grey was dominant, working as Vegas mob enforcer. In time, all three would be rammed into one by Doc Samson – the gamma-powered psychiatrist who was himself a Hulk-variation of sorts – creating a handsome, well adjusted green-skinned Hulk who could act as a mainstream superhero for the first time. Later still, during the brief Erik Larsen/Jerry Odway period, there would actually be five Hulk personalities running around: Banner, Savage, Grey, Merged/Handsome, plus an evil 'Devil' personality. It was starting to get ridiculous.

Indeed, ridiculousness and the Hulk have rarely been total strangers, but there have been plenty of cool and memorable plotlines over the years too. Steve Englehart came up with a particularly horrifying predicament for Major Glen Talbot – Thunderbolt Ross' long-term deputy, and Banner's rival for Betty's love – when he was abducted by the Commies and subjected to all sorts of indignities, while those who balk at Betty being turned into the Red She-Hulk in recent years may do well to remember she has a Lois Lane-style history of bizarre transformations, memorably becoming a fragile figure of glass in #138 – stay away, Hulk! You're too clumsy! – or transformed

> **"The highlight of many a tale would be the moment Banner gives in to the beast within"**



The artists change, the scowl stays the same...



into the ugly, naked Harpy for years, feathers clumsily strewn across her cleavage.

Though Englehart's was clearly one of the stronger writing runs, others had their moments too, Len Wein introducing a certain claw-sprouting superstar in #180/181, while Todd McFarlane's muscular '80s take on the character (all anger and gnashing teeth) made him a major sales success for a time. Even dull old Roger Stern – whose drab run coincided with the similarly down-to-earth hit TV show of the late '70s – had his moments.

MR INCREDIBLE

Ah, the TV show. Well-cast, and with an in-built sadness – it made much of the appealing contrast between the stoic, self-pitying wanderer Bill 'David Banner' Bixby and teary-eyed, green-painted muscleman Lou Ferrigno – it rocked plots that could have been from the Lee/Trimpe era, but with the budget screwed right down.

Every week, Banner would roll into town and immediately find himself in the midst of some conflict between two established factions – but instead of monsters and strange realms, here they were merely a succession of thugs in small California burgs.

It was to be a set-up actually reused by the comics, many years later, when writer Bruce Jones stripped everything down to a film noir 'man on the run' tale, a darker yet take on *The Fugitive* – but now with even less Hulk! Conspiracies swam in the background, and the paranoia was well done, but ultimately it was too slow-moving – it shed readers like a moulting dog.

Of course, Hulk is not above reusing other plotlines too. From 2006 onwards he was largely off-world in the Greg Pak's *Planet Hulk/World War Hulk* epics, but this has happened numerous times before – not least in #300, when Doctor Strange, acting alone this time, exiled him to the 'Crossroads'. It was this basic concept that Pak would run with in the most important Hulk run of recent years, when a secret cabal of superhero leaders (Reed Richards et al), considering Hulk too much of a risk on Earth, rocket him unwillingly into space.

The idea is he'll live alone on an uninhabited planet, smashing nobody – but of course it all goes wrong, and Hulk ends up on Sakaar instead, a violent place of super-powered gladiator battles, with Hulk an unlikely Spartacus. Winning the throne, usurping the dictator, Hulk and his space gladiator pals now come to Earth, revenge in mind. It was thrilling, ground-breaking stuff and put ol' greenskin right back at the centre of the Marvel U.

Since then we've seen Hulk replaced in his own book by Hercules for a time, while recent spins on the theme have been dominated by new sub-Hulks: Red Hulk (ol' Thunderbolt Ross, now transformed into a calculating, military-minded version); Skaar, Hulk's son; Betty in Red She Hulk mode. A recent Jason Aaron-driven run saw Banner and Hulk split once more, this time by Doctor Doom, and when they're joined again Hulk becomes the leader personality, only reverting Banner when he becomes too chilled and calm. On their merging finally, Banner seems to at last accept that, just maybe, being Hulk makes him a better person.

There have been many strong takes on Hulk over the years, with some great ideas lost along the way. (One that was too limiting, perhaps: the early idea that Banner turns into the Hulk at sunset, reminiscent of the way our mind works when asleep, dreams coming from outside our conscious control. It allowed for some powerful images, the Hulk locked at dusk in an undersea, underground prison by Banner, smashing at the walls in impotent fury – repression writ large.)

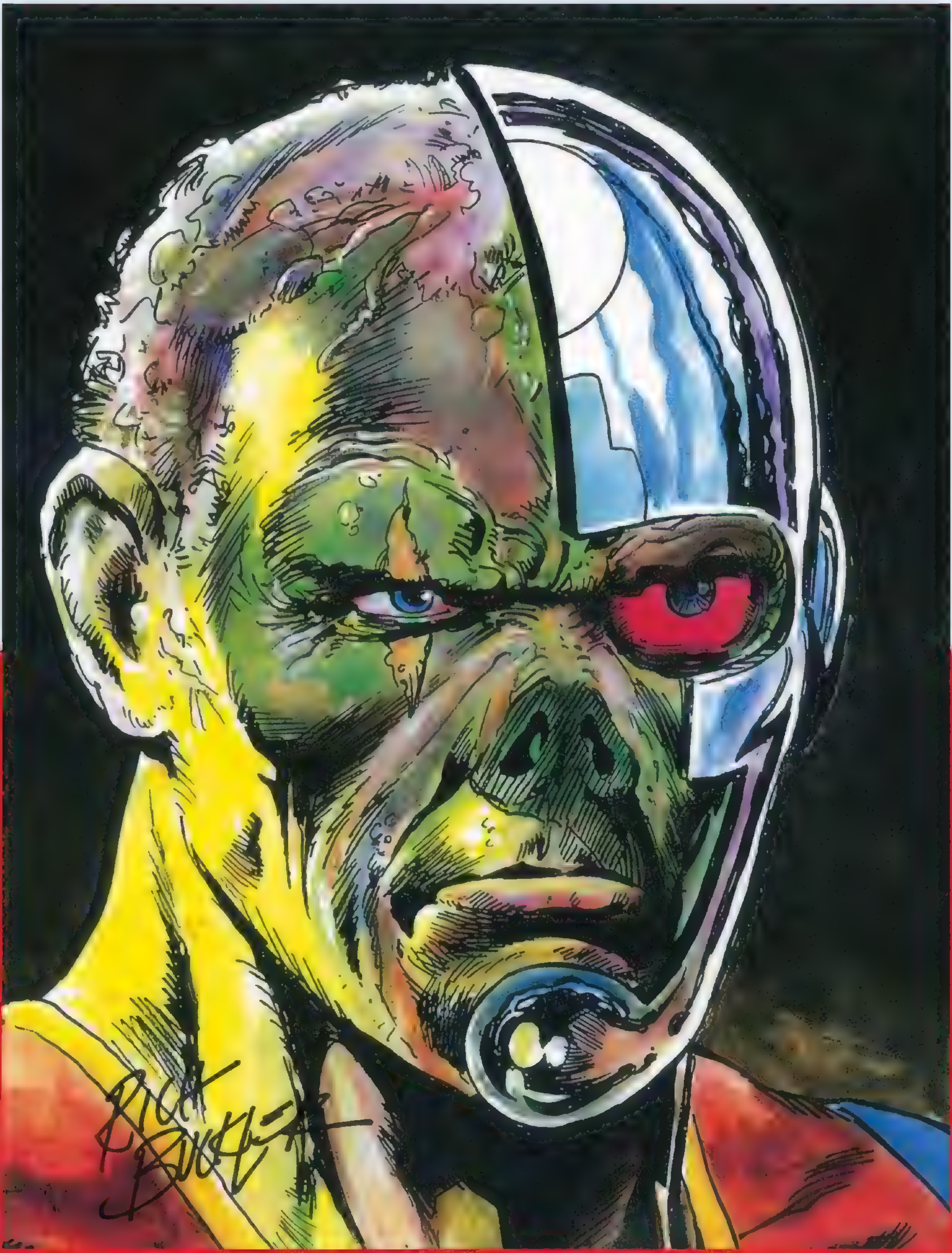
The night-terror Hulk was a great creation, but the version we ultimately enjoyed was a better one – this lumbering monster, an adolescent suddenly grown into a powerful new body, forever seeking to slam his bedroom door against the world. It swims in a richer psychological soup than virtually any other comic book hero.

And it's a depth that extends to his supporting cast too. For many years, for instance, Betty's relationship with Banner/the Hulk could be read as either one of loving acceptance of a partner's flaws – or as the ultimate foolish woman sticking by her violent man. Get away, Betty, we occasionally wanted to scream. Dump him! Run!

With his multiple personality disorder writ large and literal, Bruce Banner and the Hulk endure, bending in any direction his creators wish to take him – but never breaking. Hulk's just too strong for that.

Hulk's new ***Indestructible*** *series is part of Marvel Now!*

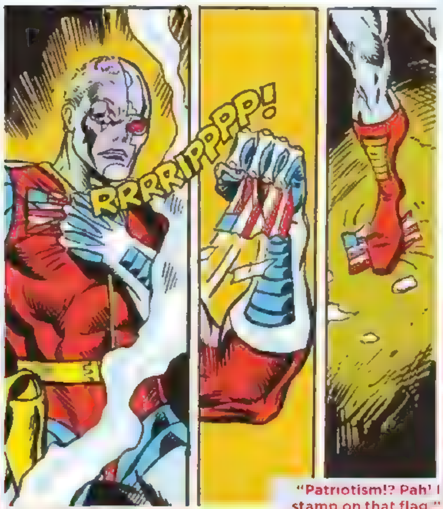
LIFE AFTER DEATH



Deathlok: Captain America crossed with Frankenstein's monster. Intense, inventive, and way ahead of its time. **By David Currie**

Modern comics are heaving with hulking man/machine hybrid heroes with their huge guns and bionic arms and eyes – think Cable or the JLA's Cyborg, but there are dozens more. Most of them were products of the grim 'n' gritty '80s, four-colour extrapolations of such movie inventions as Robocop, the Terminator and the rest, and as such essentially derivative figures – but this is not an accusation you could readily throw at Rich Buckler's Deathlok, odd-man-out in Marvel's early '70s expansion, a troubled future soldier years before that time.

It was August 1974, and Marvel had been experimenting – with Conan and Dracula, Killraven and Shang Chi, Master of Kung Fu – but with nothing quite as out there as the bitter, undead soldier who now showed up in *Astonishing Tales* #25. Deathlok the Demolisher was an angry reanimated corpse, one wrapped in cybernetics and sharing head-space with a bossy AI – and the stories he appeared in were dark, brutal and increasingly experimental.

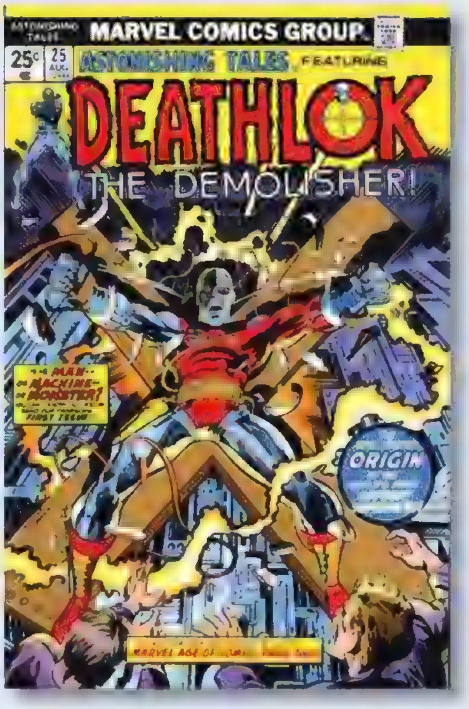

RRRRIPPPPP!

"Patriotism!? Pah! I stamp on that flag."

This guy, it turned out, was originally Colonel Luther Manning of '70s Detroit, fatally injured but reborn into the post-apocalyptic far future of 1990, where his bits had been used in Frankenstein-esque military experimentation. Lousy with metal extras – not least a symbiotic computer lodged in his brain – he soon goes rogue, battling the corrupt military and corporate titans of this ruined America.

Since his initial 12-issue run, Marvel has introduced further Deathloks – and brought the original back more than once – but rarely in the evocatively wrecked future setting that, like *Judge Dredd*'s Mega-City One, gave the original so much of its flavour.

Deathlok remains an oddity, then: short-lived, but ambitious and highly influential, a violent weepy starring a monstrous hero like few in American comics. Even more unusually, it was created by an artist – Rich Buckler, best known for his runs on the likes of *Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* – given, for a brief window of time, little if any real supervision…



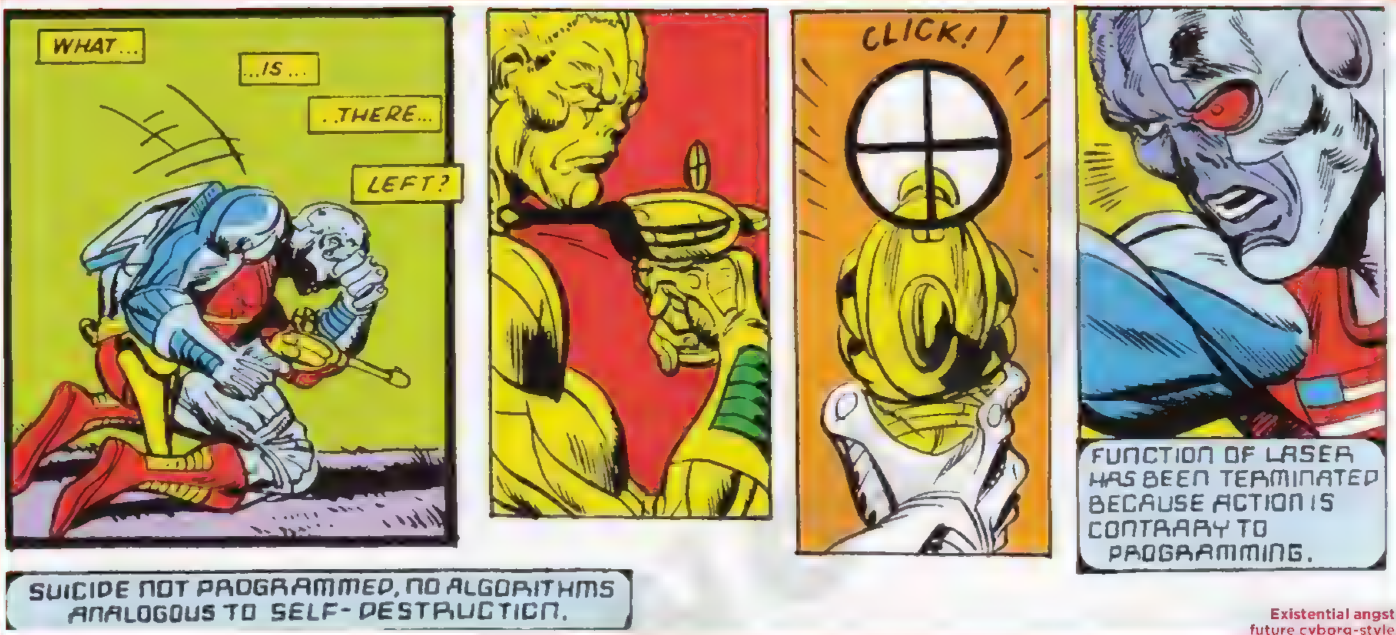
Comic Heroes: *Deathlok* didn't last long, dying with *Astonishing Tales* in 1976. You must have been gutted…?

Rich Buckler: Okay, let's go deep on this one. First of all, I'm not bitter about the cancellation of the book. My view is that it's actually amazing that *Deathlok* ever happened at all – even though I do have mixed feelings about my experience on it. Still, most of it was exciting and creatively fulfilling.

And it wasn't exactly a cancellation of *Deathlok* anyway, more that Marvel was dropping *Astonishing Tales* from its production schedule – as it did with all its other horror/supernatural books at the time.

Deathlok was the first time I got to create something totally new for a mainstream comics publisher, and one important factor – often overlooked – is that not only was I creator, writer and artist on the book, I was also the editor. This was an almost totally solo project, something unheard of – for any

> **"Many of my ideas and inspirations went flying under the radar of editorial"**


WHAT…
…IS…
…THERE…
LEFT?
CLICK!
FUNCTION OF LASER HAS BEEN TERMINATED BECAUSE ACTION IS CONTRARY TO PROGRAMMING.
SUICIDE NOT PROGRAMMED, NO ALGORITHMS ANALOGOUS TO SELF-DESTRUCTION.

Existential angst, future cyborg-style

company – at the time. Looking back, this was one of those opportunities of a lifetime that only happens once.

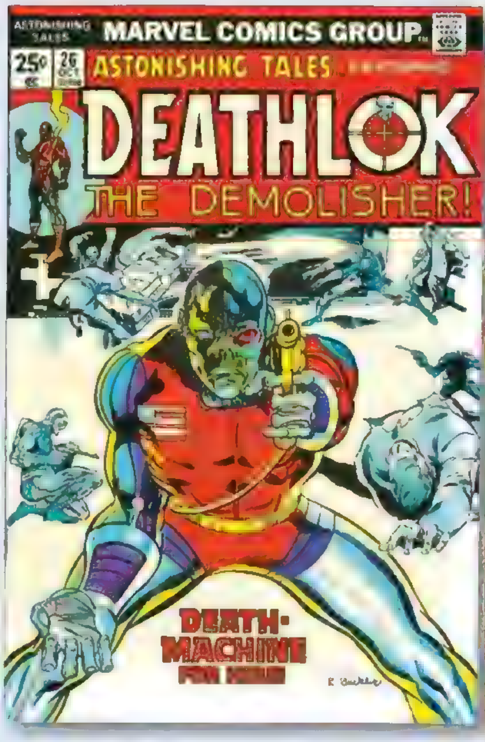
CH: So it really felt like you were getting way with something…?
RB: Of course, eventually somebody had to wake up and realise how risky this was! But until they did, in effect nobody was my boss. I was 25 years old – bold, reckless and knowing absolutely no fear, and providence smiled upon me, as many of my ideas and innovations went flying under the radar of editorial.

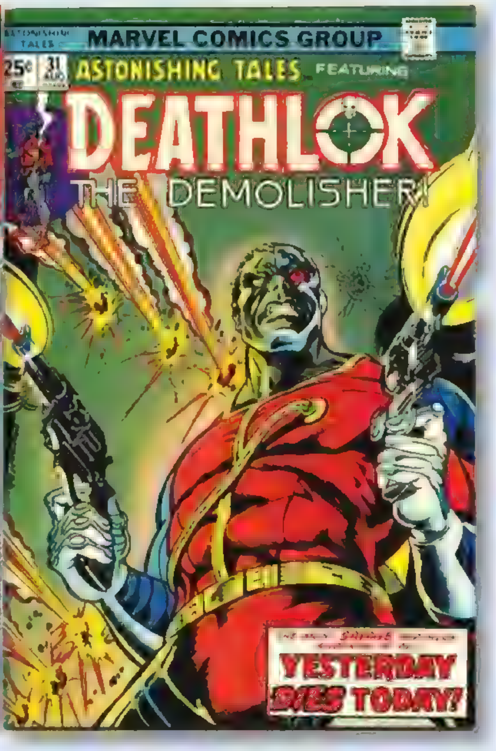
Some examples? Okay, how about the fact that white Luther Manning, Deathlok's alter-ego, was married to a black woman? Or that the main character attempted to commit suicide? Or the bit where our titular cyborg super-soldier tears the American flag off his uniform? All were 'firsts' for the comics, with many more to follow. Despite everything, these were conservative times in America – and nobody at Marvel would have given me permission to do any of it if I'd actually asked!

Still, as things progressed, my work began to be more carefully scrutinised, and after Roy Thomas left his editor-in-chief post, things became increasingly difficult for me.

CH: How so…?
RB: Oh, the more creative freedom I exercised, the more criticism I attracted. But that was okay – I could handle it, and working under a lot of pressure was nothing new. But everything about the book was unusual: the way it was created, the continuity existing outside the regular Marvel U, the progressive storytelling techniques, the rock 'n' roll story titles, the dark futuristic themes and concepts, the extreme violence, the anti-hero slant, the anti-establishment and surrealist elements… all new and uncharted territory.

So, yes, *Deathlok* was essentially my paranoid fantasy of an apocalyptic future, with a renegade cyborg super-soldier as the main character. He was a brutally efficient programmed assassin at first, and definitely not a superhero. 'Offbeat', as Stan referred to it in one of his hype pages, was putting it mildly.


ASTONISHING TALES
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
26
OCT
ASTONISHING TALES
DEATHLOK
THE DEMOLISHER!
DEATH-MACHINE FOR HIRE!
R. Buckler


ASTONISHING TALES
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
31
ASTONISHING TALES FEATURING
DEATHLOK
THE DEMOLISHER!
YESTERDAY DIES TODAY!

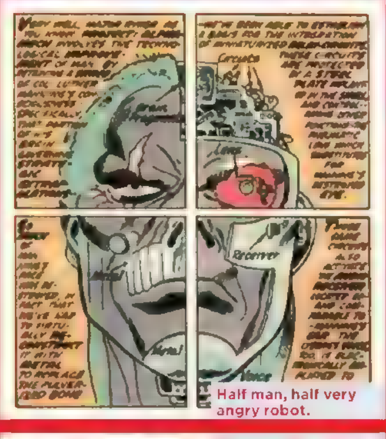
CH: So where did the whole thing come from?
RB: From the start, what I had in mind was a surreal synthesizing of Captain America and Frankenstein's monster. But as the idea gestated, it evolved into something more elaborate and more like cyberpunk – though that hadn't even been invented! I even had my characters duke it out in a 'virtual space' as their 'computer selves' were projected inside a machine – a clear precursor to cyberspace, and a good 10 years before there even was one!

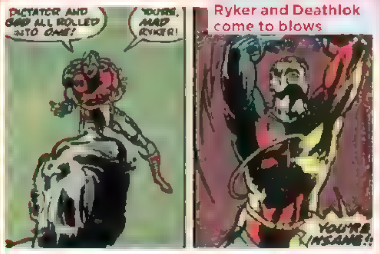
One essential idea was there from the very start: the symbolism of modern man crucified on the cross of technology gone awry. It never even occurred to me that, in terms of what readers were ready for, it might be a bit ahead of its time.

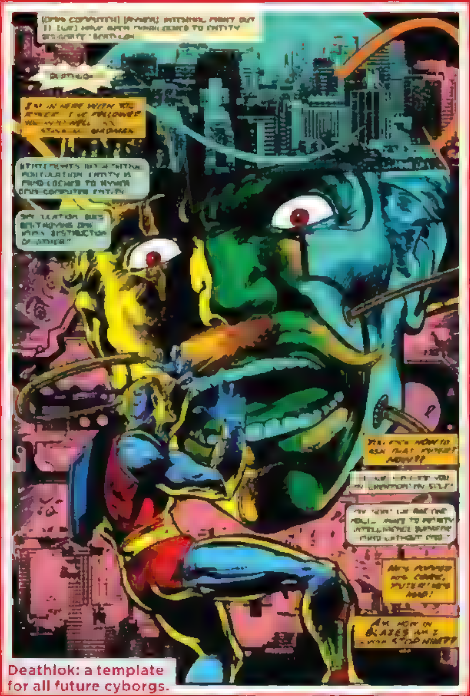
CH: Cyborgs weren't unknown at the time, of course. There was *The Six Million Dollar Man* on TV…
RB: Initially I'd thought the idea might make for a good popular novel, or an action movie. But when the novel *Cyborg* by Martin Caidin came out, and was subsequently licensed to become the TV series *The Six Million Dollar Man*, I wasn't exactly overwhelmed by the insipid and mediocre handling of the whole thing. This was not at all where I was going with my character: the TV 'bionic man', Steve Austin, was unabashedly pro-establishment, pro-military, and what we might these days refer to as 'politically correct'. Martin Caidin's novel was edgier and more thought-provoking.

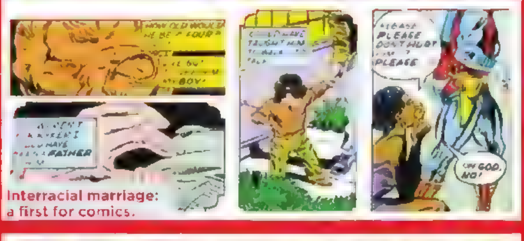
I had my own, very specific thoughts about all of this though, and wasn't about to just give up and abandon it – though I now saw there was a lot of apparent overlap between what was on the tube and my ideas. In order to save my concept I had to rethink the whole thing – and eliminate all elements that were coincidental, or might be viewed as derivative.

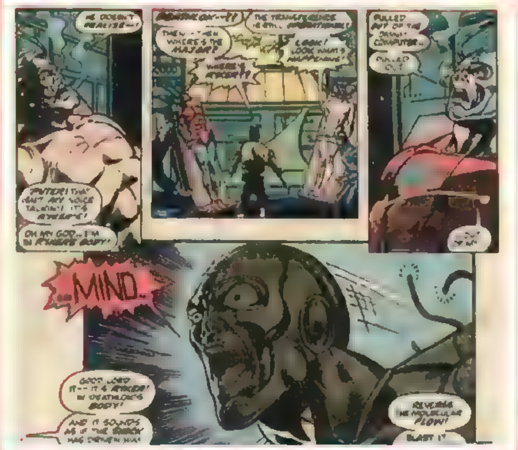
So I kicked into serious 'surrealist mode' and turned everything upside-down and inside-out, eventually coming up with something more powerful – but only vaguely resembling what I'd started out with. And boy, was I glad I did! My retooled, totally transmogrified, new

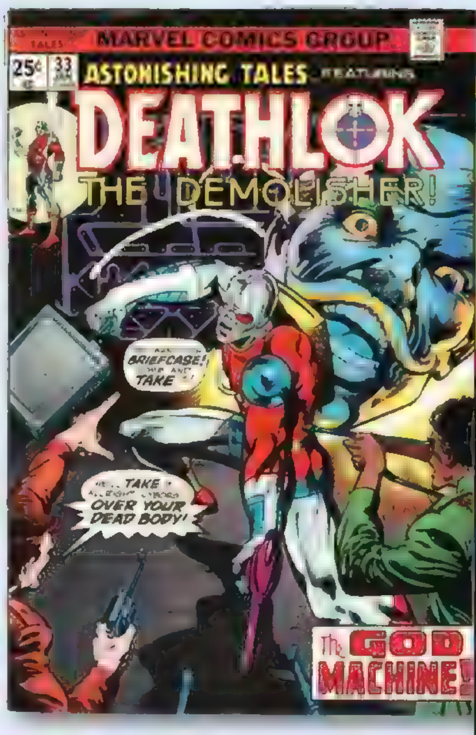

Circuits
Receiver
Voice
Half man, half very angry robot.

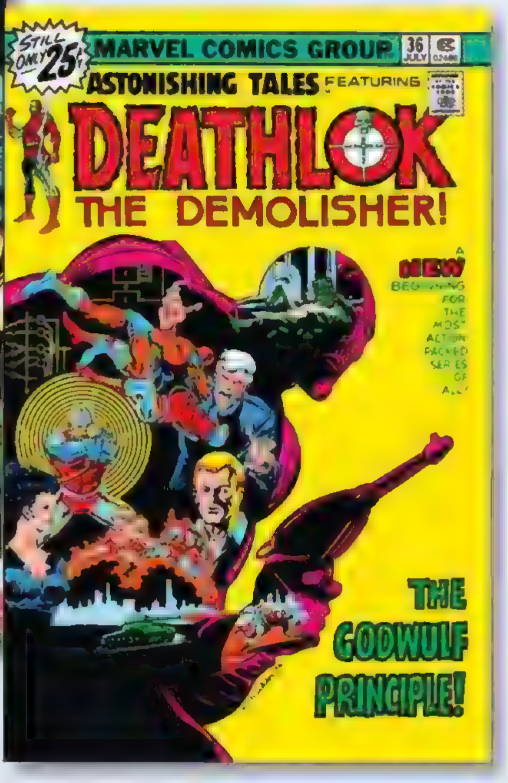

DICTATOR AND GOD ALL ROLLED INTO ONE!
YOU'RE MAD, RYKER!
YOU'RE INSANE!!
Ryker and Deathlok come to blows


Deathlok: a template for all future cyborgs.


PLEASE PLEASE DON'T HURT PLEASE
OH GOD, NO!
Interracial marriage: a first for comics.


HE DOESN'T REALIZE—!
LOOK! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!
WHERE'S RYKER?!
PULLED OUT OF THE COMPUTER…
OH MY GOD… I'M IN RYKER'S BODY!
MIND.
GOOD LORD IT— IT'S RYKER! IN DEATHLOK'S BODY!
REVERSE THE MOLECULAR FLOW!


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
33
ASTONISHING TALES FEATURING
DEATHLOK
THE DEMOLISHER!
BRIEFCASE! ...TAKE
...TAKE ...OVER YOUR DEAD BODY!
The GOD MACHINE!


STILL ONLY 25¢
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
36
JULY
ASTONISHING TALES FEATURING
DEATHLOK
THE DEMOLISHER!
A NEW BEGINNING FOR THE MOST ACTION-PACKED SERIES OF ALL!
THE GODWULF PRINCIPLE!

and much darker version is what finally became the proposal for a new comic book that I knew could only be done at Marvel.

CH: In most histories, Doug Moench is always named as co-creator, of course...
RB: The thing was, with all the important conceptual work done, I knew exactly what I wanted to do, but what I needed was a brilliant writer to help me to turn it into a focused, coherent whole. Then along came Doug Moench – we met for the first time at Marvel's offices, and from the get-go Doug and I were simpatico. This guy was as out there as I was!

From the beginning, though, all of the stories were plotted by me; Doug's job was to write the dialogue and narration. (It was the same deal with writer Bill Mantlo later in the series, though I thought Doug did it better.) At one point I took over the entire scripting chores.

Of course, there were aspects of the character that were developed further by Doug, like the handling of the distinctive 'voice' of 'Puter, Deathlok's internal computer, and the final form of his name, 'Deathlok'. (I'd originally called him 'Deadlock'.) Oh, and Warwolf – the cybernetic werewolf bad guy – was, I believe, Doug's idea. But the rest of the character names, plot elements and concepts were all me.

CH: Was it the success of Steve Austin on TV that encouraged Marvel to take a chance?
RB: I have to mention Roy Thomas here again. It was Roy who made this highly unusual deal with Marvel happen, while Sol Brodsky oversaw the drawing up of the actual contract. At the time, Marvel had been hoping to get the comic book rights to *The Six Million Dollar Man*, but Roy favoured my idea. So when Marvel's licensing bid failed – with the rights going to Charlton – and a production slot happened to open up in the bi-monthly *Astonishing Tales*, suddenly my concept was go. I remember Roy mentioning that it wouldn't be a #1 issue, but I didn't care.

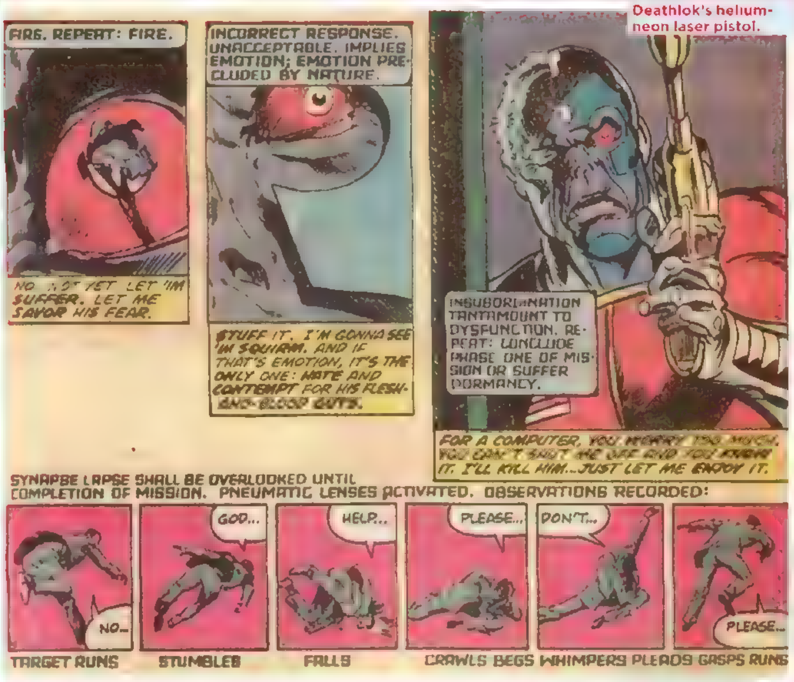
At that point Doug and I got into gear, and had a few last minute brainstorming sessions that very evening. We collaborated on a written proposal, which Doug produced in its final form literally overnight. The next day, Roy read it and gave the thumbs up.

CH: While *Cyborg* may have influenced you, it looks like Deathlok more than repaid the favour to future pop culture cyborgs...
RB: Remember, this all happened long before *Terminator* or *Robocop* or *Universal Soldier*. And yes, those characters were each – I believe – essentially derived from my creation. Without giving an entire laundry list of similarities, have you ever wondered why almost every cyborg in the movies is connected to a computer, has a half-metal face and one high-tech eye? I know I have. No movie or comic book character existed like that prior to *Deathlok*. As Stan might say, 'nuff said!'.

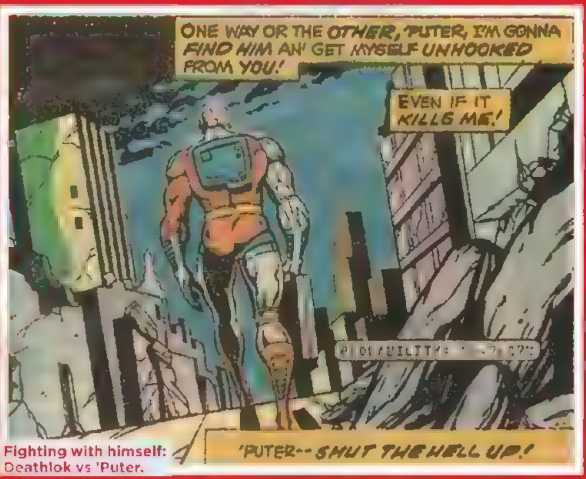
CH: But what about the character himself? Would you like to see him come back?
RB: Deathlok was multi-faceted, multi-layered, extremely surreal, and definitely ahead of his time. He was more an archetype than a comic book character. But when it was first published, few people knew what to make of it – apparently not enough to make the first series last. However, for a dead guy he sure has a way of coming back. As I've said, I think my cyborg's unique look and design elements became the commercial template for all subsequent cyborg characters.

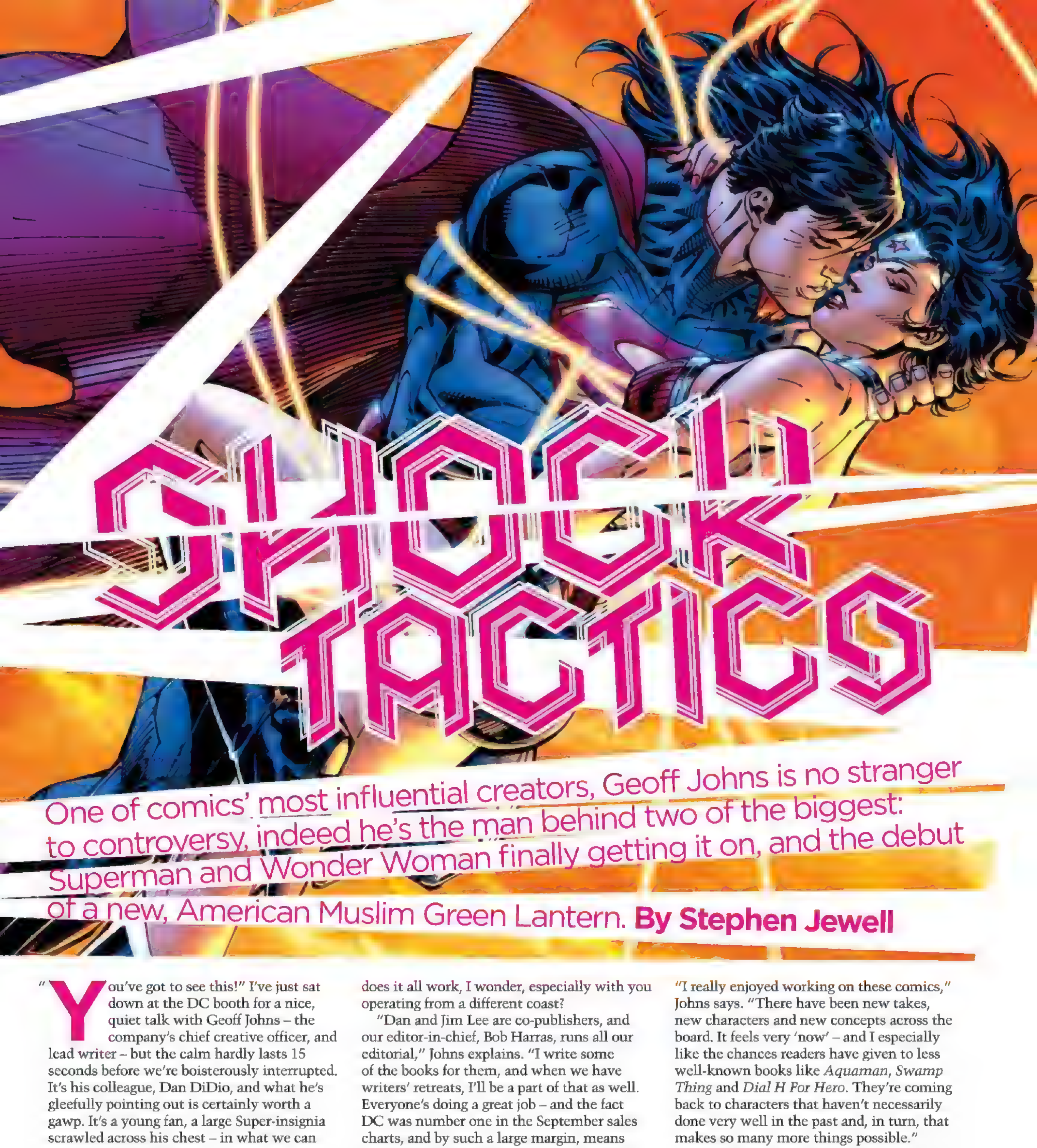
And Marvel keeps trying him out again, though – following our initial run in *Astonishing Tales* – they never got him right. There are too many versions kicking about now, and they drop the ball every time they reintroduce him for a new readership. They've never asked me for any creative input in the years since, and I just don't think versions of the character that came after reflect the depth and integrity of the original. CH

Marvel Masterworks: Deathlok Volume 1 *contains all the essential Rich Buckler issues.*


Deathlok's helium-neon laser pistol.
FIRE. REPEAT: FIRE.
NO ...NOT YET. LET 'IM SUFFER. LET ME SAVOR HIS FEAR.
INCORRECT RESPONSE. UNACCEPTABLE. IMPLIES EMOTION; EMOTION PRECLUDED BY NATURE.
STUFF IT. I'M GONNA SEE 'IM SQUIRM. AND IF THAT'S EMOTION, IT'S THE ONLY ONE: HATE AND CONTEMPT FOR HIS FLESH-AND-BLOOD GUTS.
INSUBORDINATION TANTAMOUNT TO DYSFUNCTION. REPEAT: CONCLUDE PHASE ONE OF MISSION OR SUFFER DORMANCY.
FOR A COMPUTER, YOU WORRY TOO MUCH. YOU CAN'T SHUT ME OFF AND YOU KNOW IT. I'LL KILL HIM...JUST LET ME ENJOY IT.
SYNAPSE LAPSE SHALL BE OVERLOOKED UNTIL COMPLETION OF MISSION. PNEUMATIC LENSES ACTIVATED. OBSERVATIONS RECORDED:
NO...
GOD...
HELP...
PLEASE...
DON'T...
PLEASE...
TARGET RUNS
STUMBLES
FALLS
CRAWLS BEGS WHIMPERS PLEADS GASPS RUNS

> **“Deathlok became the template for all future cyborgs”**


Fighting with himself: Deathlok vs 'Puter.
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, 'PUTER, I'M GONNA FIND HIM AN' GET MYSELF UNHOOKED FROM YOU!
EVEN IF IT KILLS ME!
'PUTER-- SHUT THE HELL UP!



SHOCK TACTICS

One of comics' most influential creators, Geoff Johns is no stranger to controversy, indeed he's the man behind two of the biggest: Superman and Wonder Woman finally getting it on, and the debut of a new, American Muslim Green Lantern. **By Stephen Jewell**

"You've got to see this!" I've just sat down at the DC booth for a nice, quiet talk with Geoff Johns – the company's chief creative officer, and lead writer – but the calm hardly lasts 15 seconds before we're boisterously interrupted. It's his colleague, Dan DiDio, and what he's gleefully pointing out is certainly worth a gawp. It's a young fan, a large Super-insignia scrawled across his chest – in what we can only hope is fake blood.

"It's really cool having a guy dress up like Superboy-Prime," laughs Johns. "You keep seeing things like that. It's so weird!"

Weird, yes. A surprise, no, for it's little wonder that Johns is the centre of attention – or that references to his work are everywhere. Appointed to his current role in February 2010, the LA-based author has been a pivotal figure in the runaway success of the New 52, not only penning its flagship title, *Justice League*, but also continuing his seven-year run on *Green Lantern* under the new rule-book – and introducing Aquaman to a whole new audience too. How on earth does it all work, I wonder, especially with you operating from a different coast?

"Dan and Jim Lee are co-publishers, and our editor-in-chief, Bob Harras, runs all our editorial," Johns explains. "I write some of the books for them, and when we have writers' retreats, I'll be a part of that as well. Everyone's doing a great job – and the fact DC was number one in the September sales charts, and by such a large margin, means something must be going on. Some said the New 52 wouldn't work for more than three months, but we've been doing it over a year, and it's still going pretty well!"

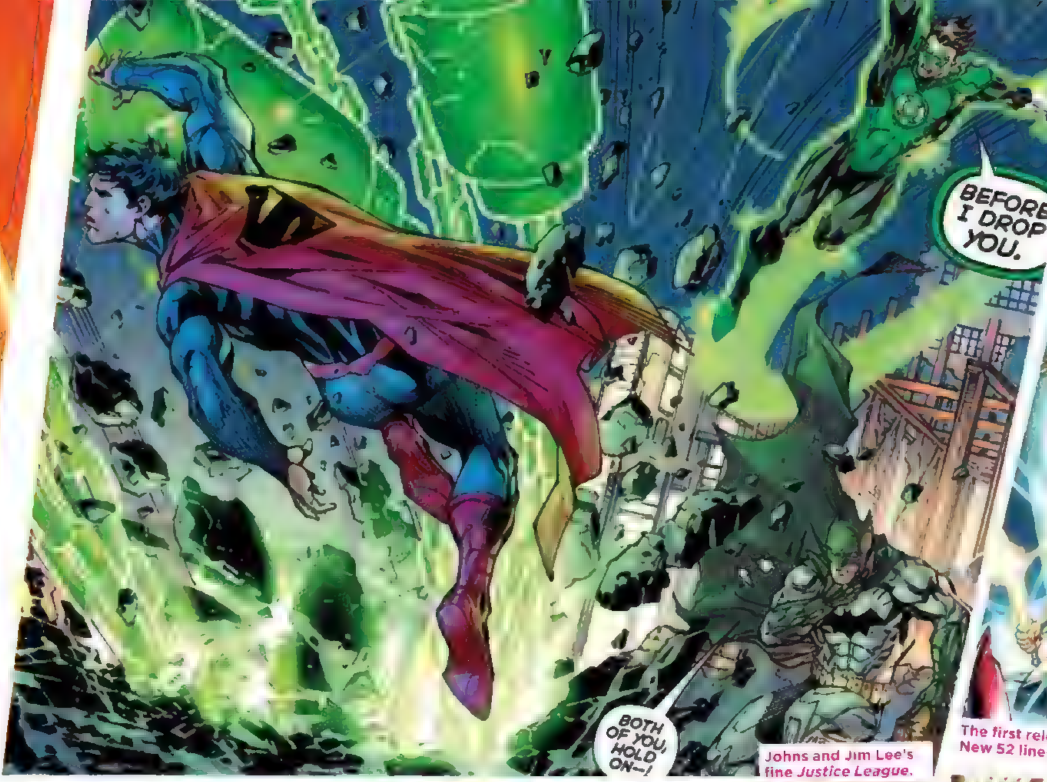
ZERO HOUR

Indeed, since ushering in the New 52 – relaunches of all the company's books, with new, simplified continuity where required – to considerable fanfare some 15 months ago now, DC has had an incredibly important year. Sales are up, pretty much across the board, and last September saw the new line's first anniversary celebrated with a month of special 'issue zero' origin stories.

"I really enjoyed working on these comics," Johns says. "There have been new takes, new characters and new concepts across the board. It feels very 'now' – and I especially like the chances readers have given to less well-known books like *Aquaman*, *Swamp Thing* and *Dial H For Hero*. They're coming back to characters that haven't necessarily done very well in the past and, in turn, that makes so many more things possible."

A childhood fan of archetypal heroes such as Superman and Batman, Johns has always felt more at home at DC than at Marvel's 'House of Ideas', though he spent a short time there in 2002, writing titles like *Avengers* and *Ultimate X-Men*.

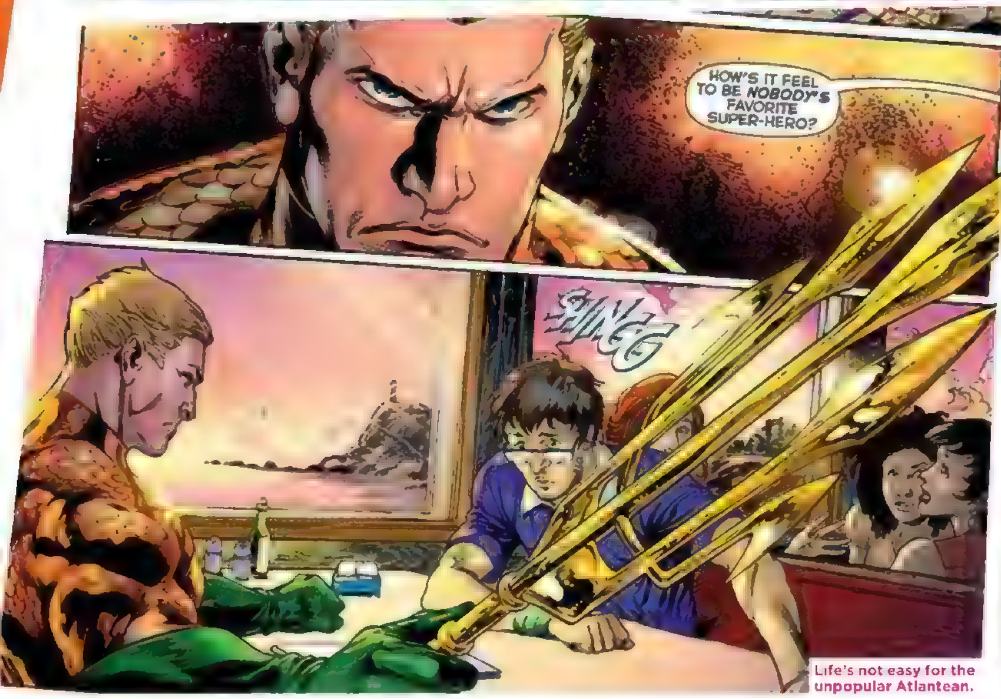
"I still love characters like Captain America, the Hulk, Ghost Rider and the Avengers," he says, "but I was always more into DC. Marvel has got some good characters too, of course, but I grew up a DC guy. In fact, my time there was very short, and I actually wish I'd had a little more. The one book that I'd love to write over there is *Doctor Strange*, and I've got a really good idea for a story for


BEFORE I DROP YOU.
BOTH OF YOU, HOLD ON--!

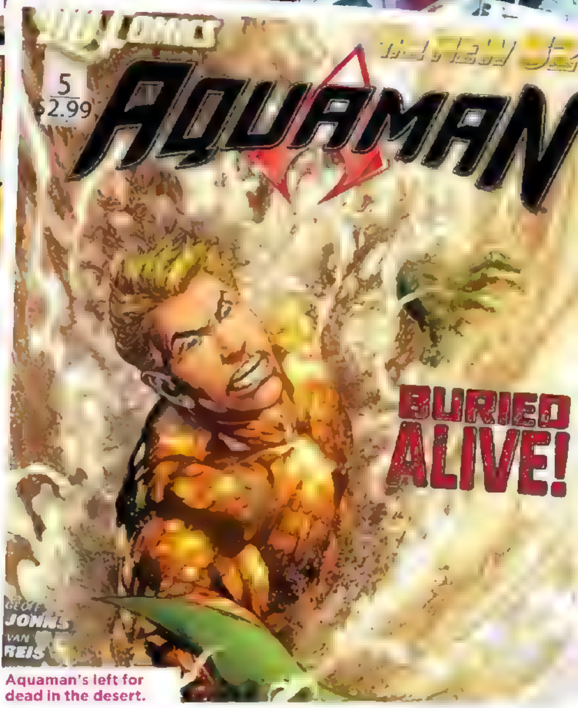
Johns and Jim Lee's fine *Justice League*.

JUSTIC
LEAGU

The first release of the New 52 line-up.


HOW'S IT FEEL TO BE NOBODY'S FAVORITE SUPER-HERO?
SHING

Life's not easy for the unpopular Atlantean.



Aquaman's left for dead in the desert.

him, but I guess it'll just have to sit in my drawer for now."

Johns compares Marvel's Sorcerer Supreme to Aquaman, a largely unloved hero who has proved to be one of the surprise hits of the New 52. "They're both characters that haven't really had a breakout," figures Johns, who will welcome new artists Paul Pelletier and Art Thibert from February's *Aquaman* #15. "We're very proud of *Aquaman*, and really pleased with how it's done. To have it outsell every Marvel monthly title for 13 months has been pretty phenomenal. It's kind of amazing that Aquaman is – and not just once but consistently – beating Spider-Man, the X-Men and a lot of other characters, all guys who are – you'd have to say – much more popular than he is."

While the King of the Seven Seas' solo adventures have more than held their own, *Aquaman* will receive an even bigger boost this month when current storyline 'Throne of Atlantis' crosses over into Johns' other, even bigger book, *Justice League*.

"We've been sewing the seeds for it since *Aquaman* #1, and they're just starting to pay off now," he says, pointing out the way he's been using the pages of DC's premier team book to shine a light on each of the individual League members.

"If the first year was all about the League being fractured, the second is about these guys coming together and learning about each other. We're finding out more about their pasts, what each character has had to deal with and what their lives are like outside of the Justice League, and then how they're coming together to support one another.

"With the Cheetah storyline [*Justice League* #13-14], that was, at heart, a Wonder Woman story – but the Justice League also got involved. With 'Throne of Atlantis', Aquaman is obviously front and centre, while the next story will illuminate another of the members, not only to the readers, but to the League's teammates too."

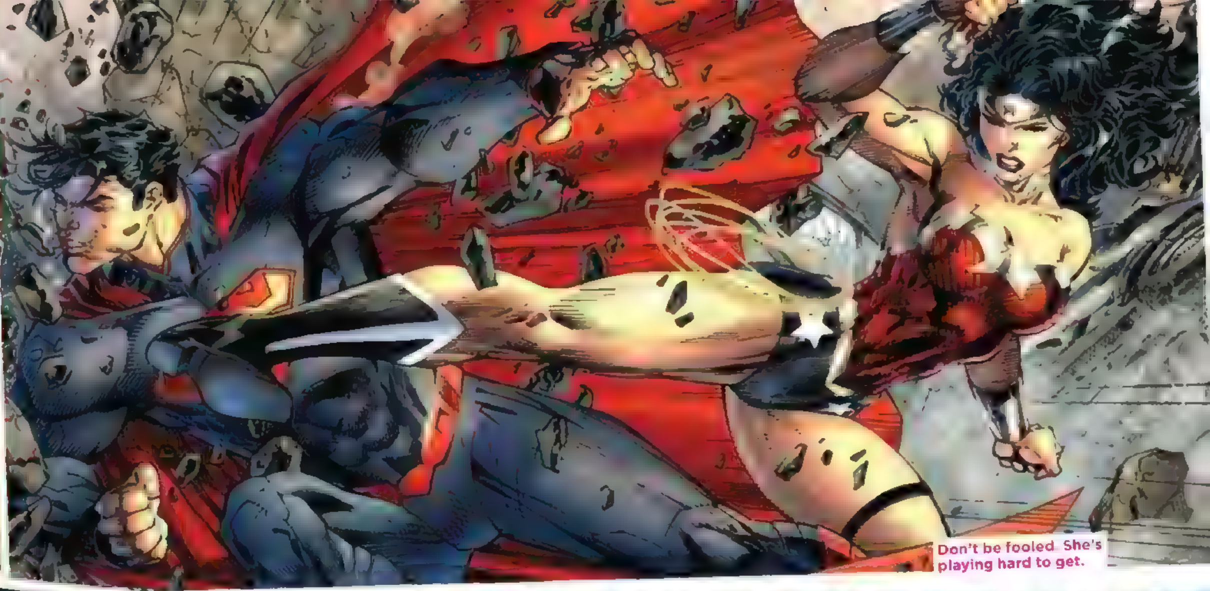
Following the unprecedented mainstream media attention afforded to the advent of the New 52 – particularly in the US – it's no surprise that *Justice League* was the focus of increasingly feverish headlines when it served up a recent real shocker, sensationally revealing that Superman and Wonder Woman are now an item.

"It showed just how much the world loves these characters," Johns smiles, both entertained and pleased. "Superheroes have »

> **“It's kind of amazing that Aquaman is consistently beating Spider-Man and the X-Men”**

DC Comics
The New 52!
Green Lantern

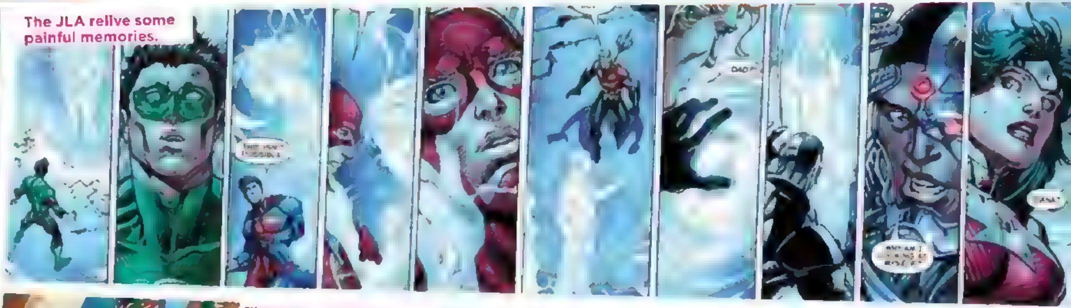
Sinestro: plotting and glowering, as usual.



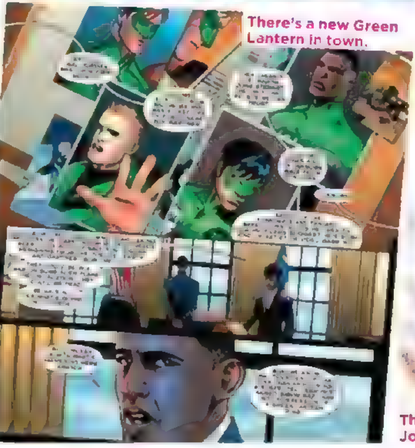
Don't be fooled. She's playing hard to get.

The New 52!
Green Lantern
13 $2.99
Johns
Mahnke

Simon Baz makes his unexpected debut.



The JLA relive some painful memories.



There's a new Green Lantern in town.

IMPULSE?
IMPULSE.
IMPULSE?

The West family: Johns' favourites.

romances in comics all the time, but when it's two characters like Superman and Wonder Woman it's a massive deal.

"People want to know why and how it works? How long will it last or is it forever? When people are talking about what is happening to these characters on a massive scale like that, it just shows how iconic and global our heroes are."

Johns admits that such a superpowered relationship would never have got off the ground within the staid confines of the old DC Universe.

"The one thing about the New 52 is that things really are very different now," notes Johns. "We're always looking to try different things, and there's never a sense of, 'No, don't do that!' It's always more like, 'Okay, let's think about that. Is it a good idea? Shall we try it?' It's given us a lot of freedom."

Unsurprisingly, Johns remains tight-lipped over where this particular storyline is going, and whether the Kryptonian and the Amazonian will continue to be the DCU's 'It Couple', or if the pair's tempestuous affair will crash and burn.

"You'll have to find out in the story," teases Johns, who – following the departure of original artists Jim Lee and Scott Williams – will be joined on the book by his erstwhile *Aquaman* foils Ivan Reis and Joe Prado, beginning from *Justice League* #15 on.

"There's definitely a sense of them being slightly askew from everyone else. That's seen in *Justice League* #12, and there are scenes in #13, #14 and so on that really start to illustrate it too. But these are two people who have now found each other, and who can relate to each other on a lot of different levels, so we'll have to see where that leads."

And if that wasn't enough, Johns has found himself in the spotlight again recently, following the debut of Arab-American ringslinger Simon Baz, a new Green Lantern who first appeared in that title's #0. A hero close to his own heart, Johns launched this latest addition to the ranks of DC's Emerald Knights at the Arab American National Museum in his hometown of Detroit.

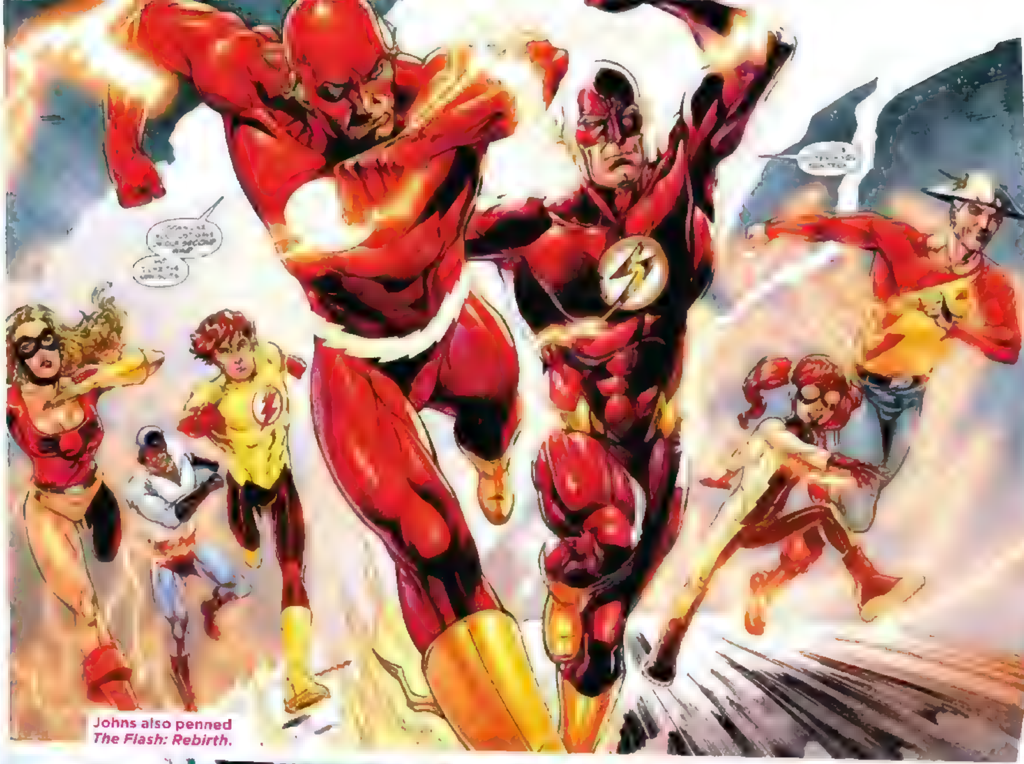
"I have to say, when I was working on Simon's story, I drew from my own heritage," he says. [Johns is of Lebanese extraction.] "But I also love Michigan – it was such a beautiful place to grow up, and the people there are great. I know the town very well, so it was fun to use all that too."

Like the superpowered tryst between Superman and Wonder Woman, Baz's very existence is a natural fit for the New 52 that almost certainly wouldn't have happened just a few years back. "I wanted to create a character," Johns explains, "who's an individual, but who also feels like a wonderful thematic element to deal with in the Green Lantern universe. His story is so central to the concept and the basic character, that it seemed to really resonate: after all, Green Lantern is all about fear on a lot of different levels."

Such as…?

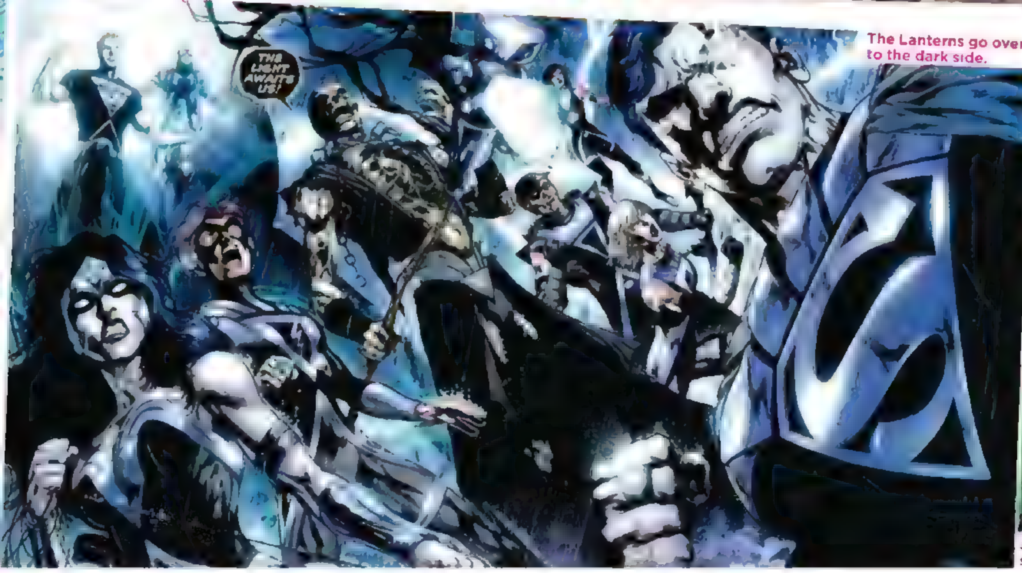
"Well, it doesn't have to be something obvious like a supervillain coming to attack us – it could be cultural fear instead, or all sorts of other things. It's very personal, and very epic at the same time, so to bring it all together in a story like this was exciting, and I'm still finding it that way. In fact, I'm really proud of Simon; I think he's a great character, and people at the panels at Cons like this seem to respond really well to him too. I've already seen a guy dressed up like him!"

It's strange: there seemed to be no particular need for another Green Lantern a few months ago, but now Simon Baz exists it's hard to imagine the DC landscape without him. Partly it's because he allows the DCU to address the US's sizeable Arab-American population, until now little catered for in comics, but partly it's because he carries a wider resonance too; he should also strike a



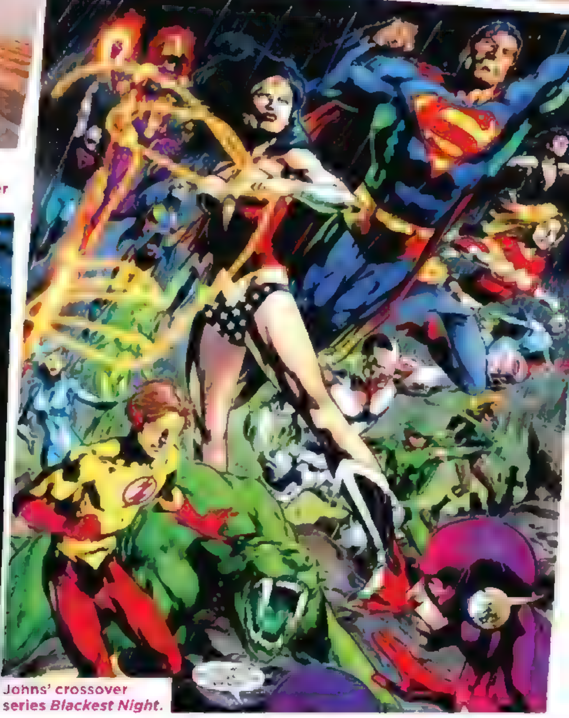
Johns also penned *The Flash: Rebirth.*

Indigo-1 presents her colourful backstory.



THE LIGHT AWAITS US!

The Lanterns go over to the dark side.



Johns' crossover series *Blackest Night*.

major chord with Britain's Asian comic book fans, for instance.

"Well, there are more than a billion and a half Muslims in the world," says Johns, "so it's kind of extraordinary to believe that a major Muslim superhero would be even a tiny bit controversial. He'll be in the main *Green Lantern* book going forward, and he'll also be a part of the new *Justice League Of America* title that I'm working on with David Finch next year."

KILLER QUEEN

As if his numerous comic book assignments are not enough, Johns is also contributing to DC's latest TV venture, *Arrow*, which has received impressive ratings and reviews since debuting on youth-orientated US network The CW, home of *Gossip Girl* and *The Vampire Diaries*, just the week before New York Comic Con.

"We're really excited that it's done so well," says Johns, who's written the seventh episode, 'Muse On Fire'. "It's nice to have another show on The CW again after *Smallville*, although *Arrow* is a vastly different thing."

Indeed, as one of DC's world famous, but perennially second-string, heroes, it's questionable as to whether Green Arrow could command a feature film on his own, but his – by superhero standards! – low-key and realistic abilities seem perfectly suited to the small screen.

"Oliver Queen is such a compelling character, even if you take away all the arrow stuff," argues Johns. "He's a guy who is spoilt and self-centred; almost like the TMZ-era kid, who's got everything he wants, but loses it all after he is stranded on an island. He has to fight to survive, and then rebuild who he is. He then comes back and has to deal with the world, and all the things that his father did that he now wants to change. On top of all that, of course, he has a bow and arrow that he shoots bad guys with!"

With Deadshot having already made his first appearance on the show, and the likes of Deathstroke and the Huntress waiting in the wings, *Arrow* has become the perfect venue for bringing DC's lesser-known characters to a mainstream audience.

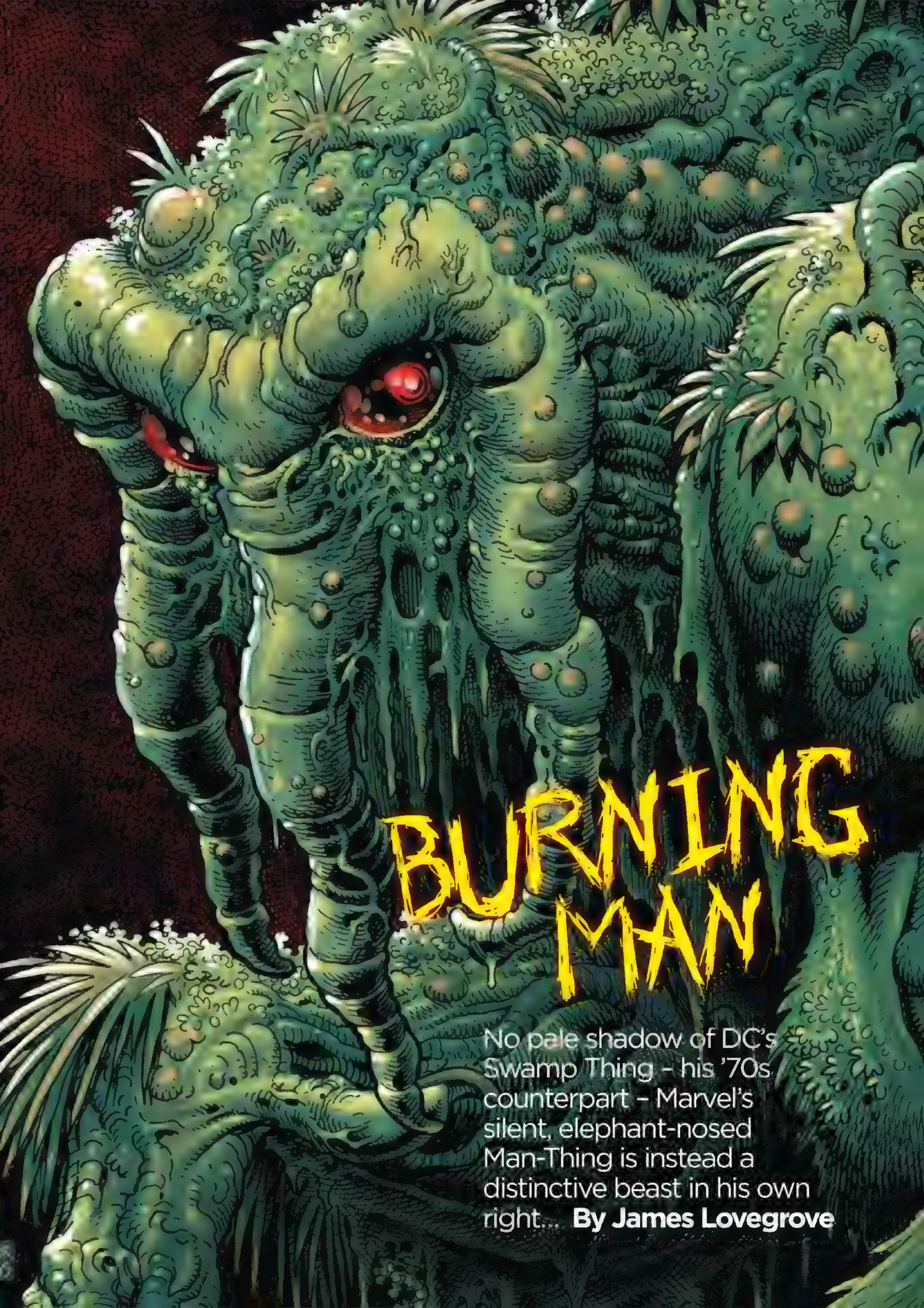
"I'm really psyched for people to see what we've got coming up," Johns says – while absolutely refusing to confirm when, or even if, existing character Laurel (aka Dinah) Lance will take up the mantle of Green Arrow's other half, Black Canary. Also unclear: whether occasionally hapless sidekick Speedy will rear his (or her?) troubled head. What I can say is that it's inspired by the comics, and there will certainly be other street-level characters from the books pulled into it. But it's very grounded, so you won't see anyone with superpowers. Laurel is obviously Black Canary in the comics – but not everything will be the same in the show."

Johns is equally reticent when it comes to the future prospects of the New 52.

"It's only been going a little over a year, so we'll just have to see what happens," he eventually suggests. "There's been a lot of discussion, of course, about how we need to keep the stories and the characters interesting and fresh. I think one of the keys is to keep introducing new concepts, as we've done with *Green Lantern* and *Aquaman*. Fans want to read new stuff, and they don't just want you to produce another version of a comic book they read five or ten years ago. I love that there's so much new stuff coming out right now, and – as the audience – you really don't know how any of it is going to end." ■

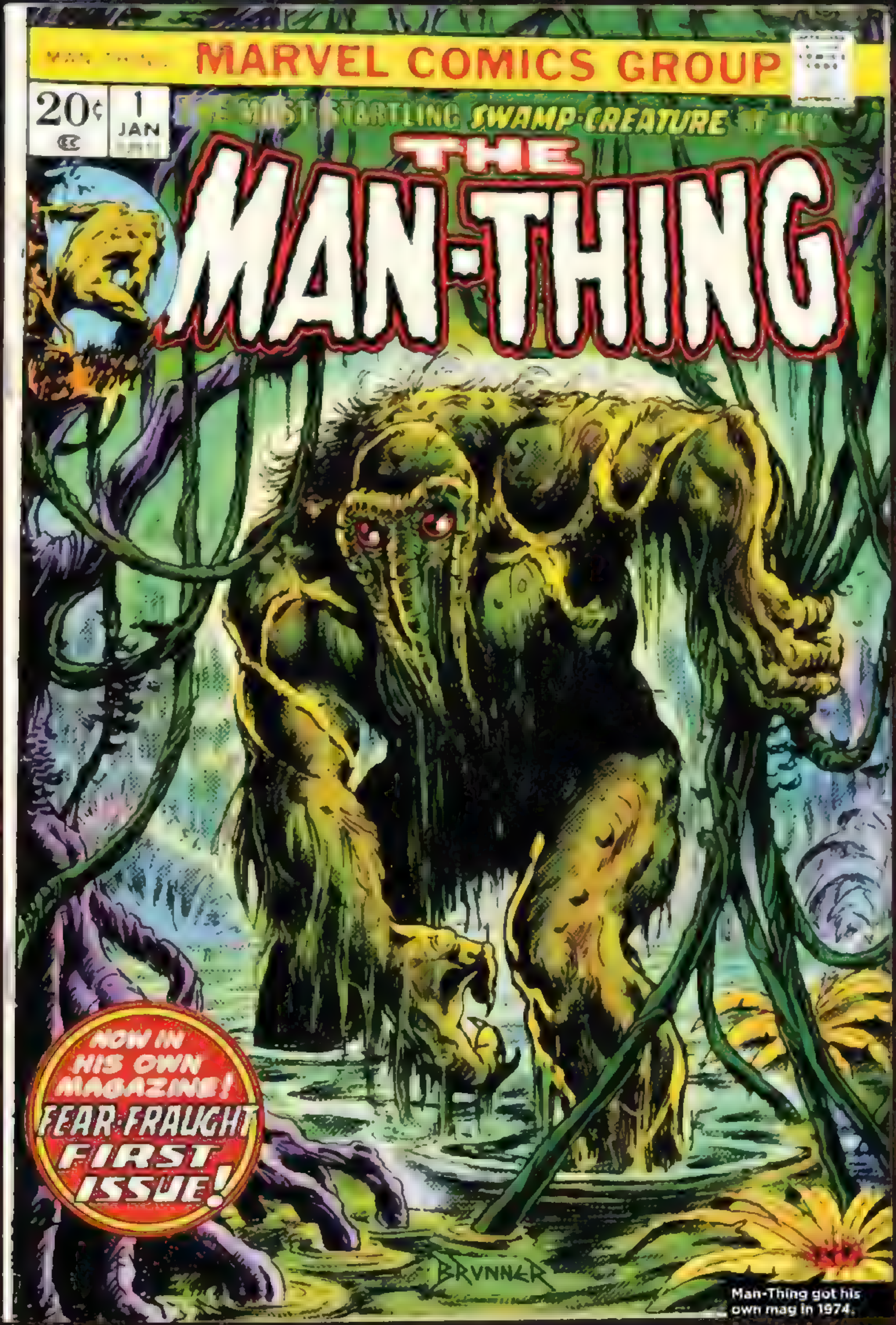
---

*Geoff Johns remains on **Justice League** and **Green Lantern**; the new **Justice League Of America** comic with David Finch, featuring what look to be darker, more government-sponsored adventures for the likes of Green Arrow, Catwoman and Martian Manhunter, launches in 2013.*

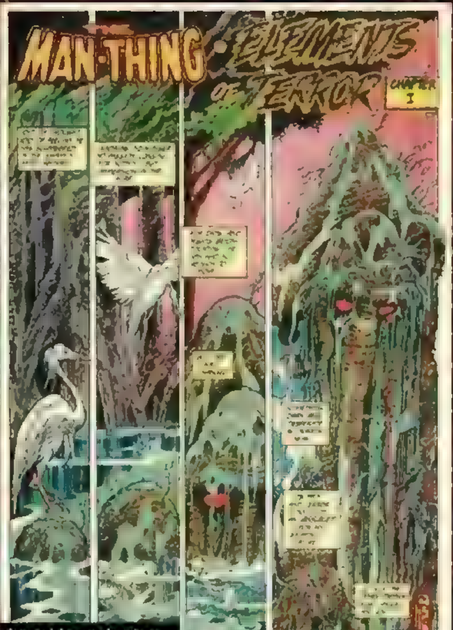


BURNING MAN

No pale shadow of DC's Swamp Thing – his '70s counterpart – Marvel's silent, elephant-nosed Man-Thing is instead a distinctive beast in his own right... **By James Lovegrove**

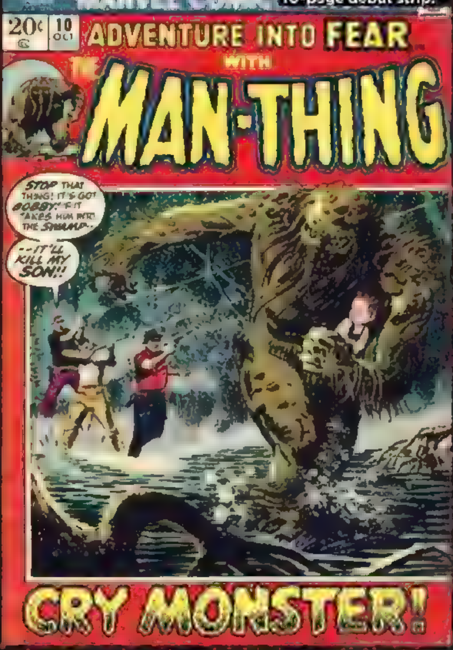

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢
1 JAN
THE MOST STARTLING SWAMP-CREATURE OF ALL!
THE MAN-THING
NOW IN HIS OWN MAGAZINE! FEAR-FRAUGHT FIRST ISSUE!
BRUNNER

Man-Thing got his own mag in 1974.



A muddy awakening in *Marvel Fanfare* #36.

The Conway-scripted 10-page debut strip.


MARVEL COMICS
20¢
10 OCT
ADVENTURE INTO FEAR WITH THE MAN-THING
STOP THAT THING! IT'S GOT BOBBY! IT TAKES HIM INTO THE SWAMP--
--IT'LL KILL MY SON!!
CRY MONSTER!

Whatever knows fear', went the blurb, 'burns at the touch of the Man-Thing!' And as taglines go, they don't get much better than that. Those 10 words sum up everything you need to know about Marvel's premier monster of the '70s: even if you were unfamiliar with the character, you'd grasp the essential premise in a flash, and would surely be intrigued to find out more.

Man-Thing first shambled into the Marvel U in 1971, in a black-and-white short tucked away in the pages of *Strange Tales* #1. He was co-conceived by Stan Lee and Roy Thomas, based (in Thomas' own words) on "the notion of a guy working on some experimental drug or something for the government, his being accosted by spies, and getting fused with the swamp so that he becomes this creature".

The scientist's name is Ted Sallis, and he's attempting to create a chemical solution that will turn men into super-soldiers, for a scheme called Project: Gladiator. When his own wife sells him out to an unidentified enemy agency (later retconned as AIM), Sallis injects himself with the formula and, fleeing, crashes his car into the Florida swamps. A combination of science and, we learn in due course, mystical forces brings him back to life as a seven-foot mass of sentient vegetation, super-strong and all-but-indestructible, his body wreathed in twisted roots and stems, his face sporting a lumpy carrot-like nose and brow and doleful crimson eyes.

SWAMPED BY MONSTERS

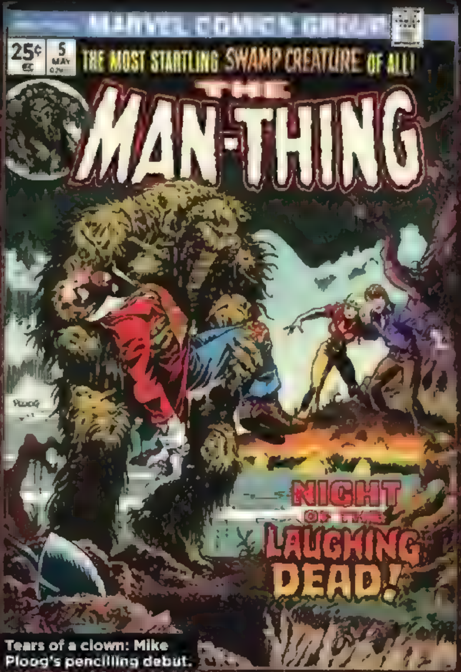
There must have been something in the Manhattan air back then, beside the usual pigeons and carcinogens, because over at DC, entirely coincidentally, Len Wein and Berni Wrightson were dreaming up their very own human-swamp-chemicals interface entity: Swamp Thing. Both monsters, in turn, owed a debt to Golden Age comics muck-beast The Heap, who himself was resurrected in his own title by Skywald Comics that very same year. Typical. You wait ages for a swamp monster to come along, then three turn up at once.

At any rate Man-Thing, after a guest appearance in the *Ka-Zar* feature in *Astonishing Tales*, was finally granted a strip of his own in October 1972, when he commandeered horror-reprint anthology *Adventure Into Fear*, beginning with #10. Gerry Conway scripted that issue, but Steve Gerber took over with #11, and it's here that Man-Thing's story really starts.

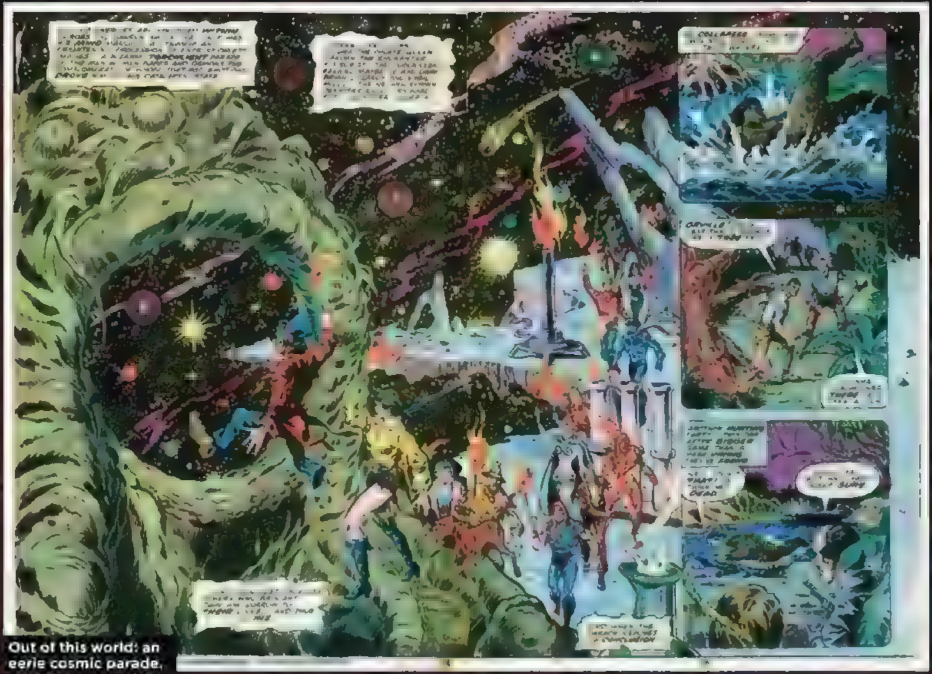
Gerber, a Missourian newly installed on the Marvel staff and already disenchanted with writing cookie-cutter superheroics, realised that a series centred solely on a creature who can neither speak nor think, but only respond empathically to the emotions of others, was going to be a tall order – not to mention a hard sell. Readers were unlikely to come back month after month to follow the adventures of a mindless, personality-free cipher who wanders around the Everglades, clashing now and then with the local wildlife and moonshine-sodden hillbillies.

Instead, the strip became a vehicle for human-interest stories – and Gerber's unique brand of outsider satire. Man-Thing remained the nominal star, the mossy nucleus around which the plots orbited, but what counted

All images © Marvel Comics


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
5
THE MOST STARTLING SWAMP CREATURE OF ALL!
THE MAN-THING
PLOOG
NIGHT OF THE LAUGHING DEAD!

Tears of a clown: Mike Ploog's pencilling debut.



Out of this world: an eerie cosmic parade.

were the people whose paths crossed his, a dramatis personae of angry losers, frazzled outcasts, dangerous crazies, and well-meaning but ineffectual hippies.

Nothing escaped Gerber's writerly wrath and bile. He criticised rapacious land developers, embodied in the form of the unsubtly-named businessman FA Schist. He tackled racism, somewhat heavy-handedly but with balance. He tweaked DC's nose with his Superman parody character Wundarr (Marvel was nearly sued by its rival over the story, and Gerber came close to being sacked by Lee). He introduced the messianic Foolkiller, a religious nut-bar prone to slaying anyone who does not meet up to his lofty moral code, using a 'ray of purity' gun. And, of course, he brought us the wise-quacking Howard the Duck, who debuted – along with Korrek, a barbarian who manifests out of a jar of peanut butter – in *Adventure Into Fear* #19.

Great acclaim and popularity meant that Man-Thing graduated to his own title in 1974, by which time Gerber had really hit his stride. By this point he had established that the Everglades, or rather the particular region of it centred around the town of Citrusville, was a 'Nexus of All Realities', a point of intersection between Earth and countless otherworldly dimensions. It was a masterstroke, meaning he could write in almost any genre he felt like, from high fantasy to horror to SF, simply by broaching a portal to another alternate plane and bringing in a crew of ghostly pirates, say, or a demon, or a cone-hatted, wand-wielding magician. Although stories were usually one-and-done, with the occasional two-parter, there was still a rare sense of ongoing continuity and inner cohesion.

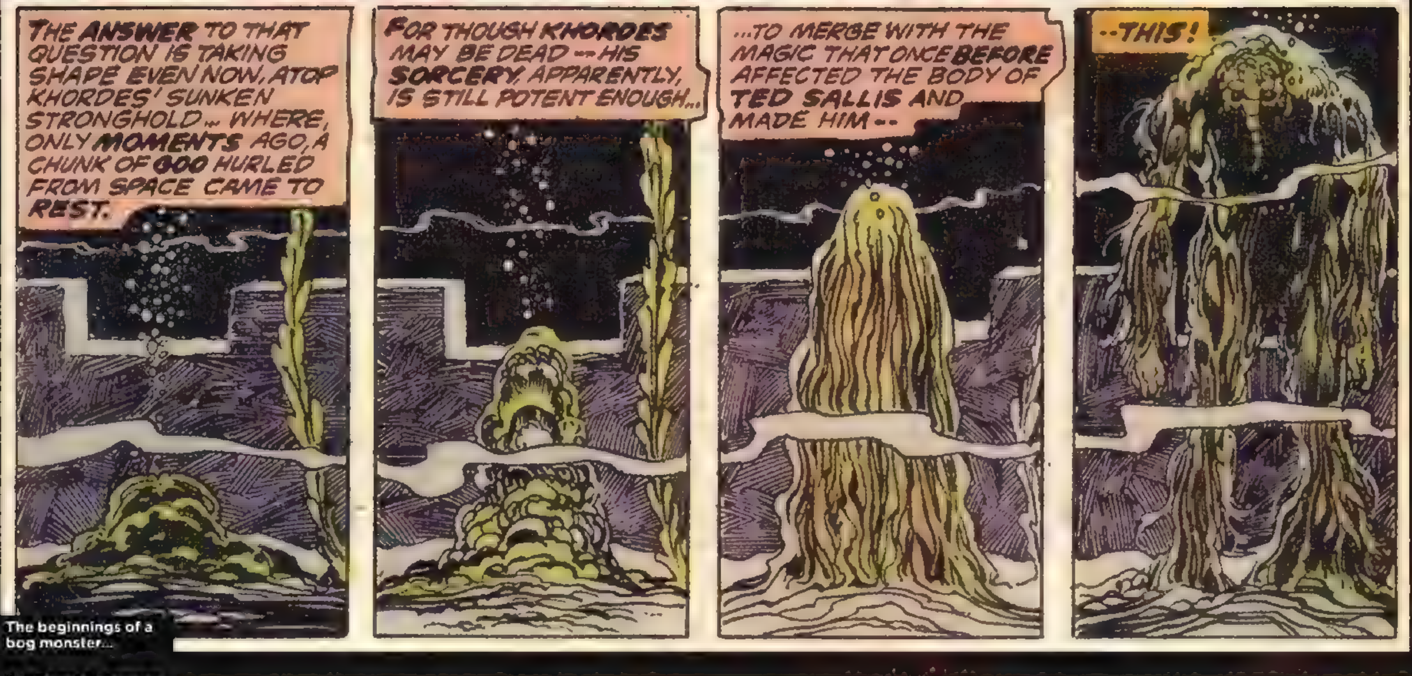
It wasn't perfect, of course. The captions could sometimes be florid and overcooked, and a certain amount of repetition set in too. Every issue, Man-Thing could be relied on to turn up like a misshapen deus ex machina and mete out moral justice by means of his incinerating fear-triggered touch – and almost invariably there would be a scene where he encounters alligators or giant snakes.

For all that, the individual tales were never less than enjoyable, and often nothing short of brilliant. 'The Kids' Night Out!' in *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #4 is a haunting, no-holds-barred study of the deadly consequences of high-school bullying. 'A Candle For Sainte-Cloud' in *Man-Thing* #15 is a powerful and moving tale of love, self-loathing and hallucination. And issues #17-18 neatly excoriate right-wing censorship and the so-called 'moral majority'.

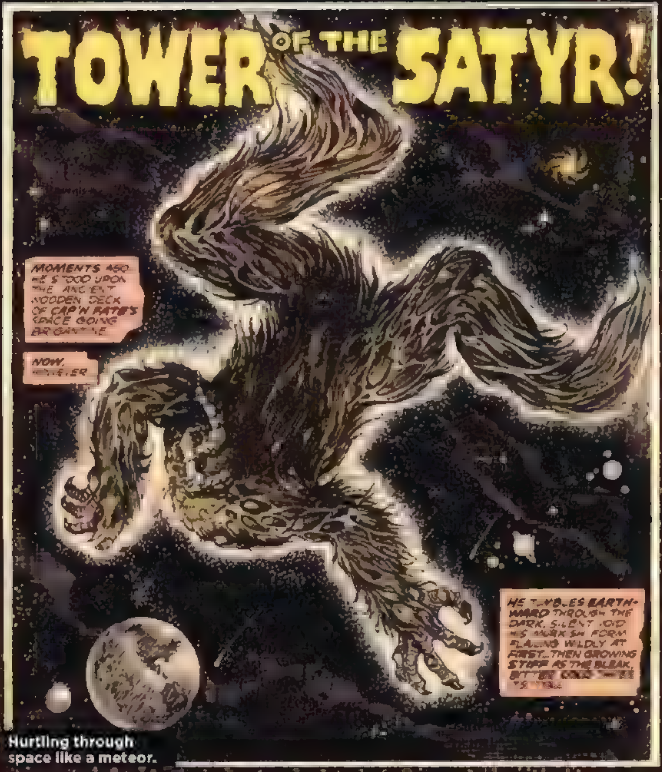
Moreover, Gerber was a whizz when it came to dreaming up story titles. 'Day Of The Killer, Night Of The Fool!' 'Night Of The Laughing Dead!' 'How Will We Keep Warm When The Last Flame Dies?' 'A Lunatic On Every Corner!' 'Pop Goes The Cosmos!' When you saw one of those advertising the next issue, how could you not want to buy it?

He was also blessed when it came to artists. Most of his *Man-Thing* scripts were graced with pencils by Val Mayerik and Mike Ploog, both of whom, if they sometimes fell short of absolute accuracy when depicting the human anatomy, could nonetheless conjure up a beautifully oozy, drippy, moody sense of place and portrayed Man-Thing himself with a glorious shaggy solidity.

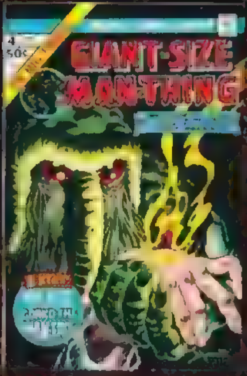
Man-Thing has always been a part of Marvel continuity, yet Gerber included superhero guest stars only sparingly, and on his own terms: a comical two-panel 'just swinging by' cameo from Daredevil and the Black Widow, for instance, or a group of

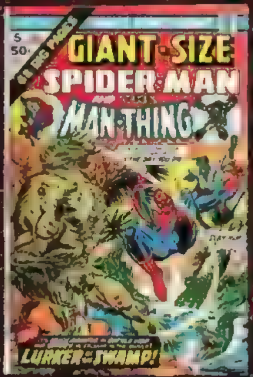

THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS TAKING SHAPE EVEN NOW, ATOP KHORDES' SUNKEN STRONGHOLD... WHERE, ONLY MOMENTS AGO, A CHUNK OF GOO HURLED FROM SPACE CAME TO REST.
FOR THOUGH KHORDES MAY BE DEAD -- HIS SORCERY, APPARENTLY, IS STILL POTENT ENOUGH...
...TO MERGE WITH THE MAGIC THAT ONCE BEFORE AFFECTED THE BODY OF TED SALLIS AND MADE HIM --
--THIS!

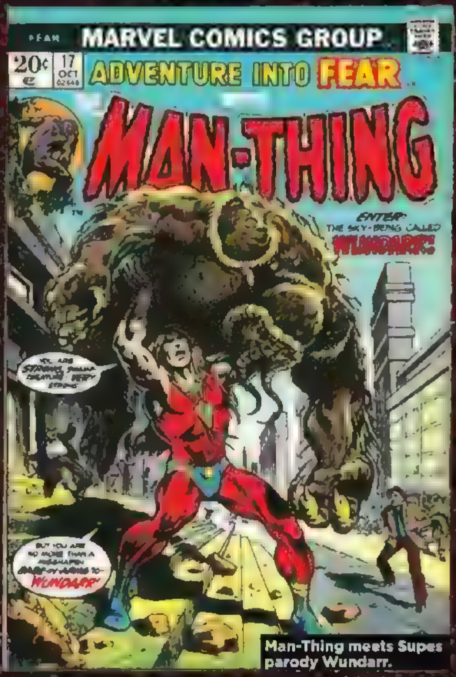
The beginnings of a bog monster...


TOWER OF THE SATYR!
MOMENTS AGO HE STOOD UPON THE ANCIENT WOODEN DECK OF CAP'N FATE'S SPACE GOING BRIGANTINE
NOW, HOWEVER

Hurtling through space like a meteor.





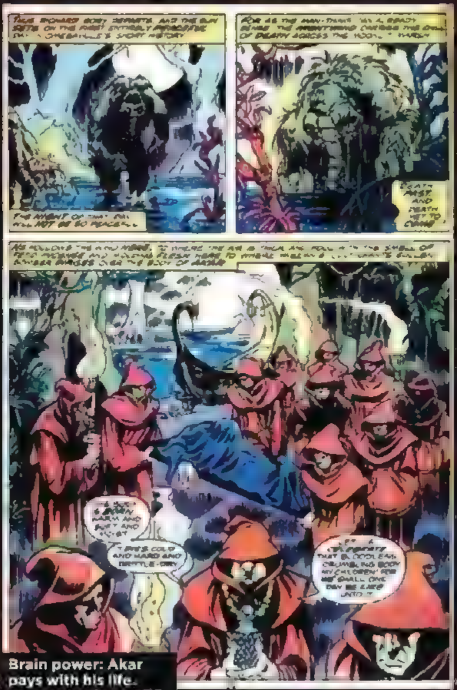


Man-Thing meets Supes parody Wundarr.

> **The individual tales were never less than enjoyable, and often nothing short of brilliant**

demons briefly masquerading as Spider-Man and Shang-Chi, among others. *Man-Thing* was very much Gerber's baby, his pocket universe within the Marvel Universe.

It was fitting, then, that his swansong story, which came when the title was cancelled in #22, features himself as a character, tying up various narrative loose ends and reflecting on his creation. "Do you realise how many lives we touched – how many deaths we've recorded – how much agony and love we've split open and dissected and exposed for the world's inspection?" this fictional Steve Gerber muses, before delivering a slightly barbed sign-off: "It's been fun. Honest. I'll miss it. But I really can't go on... it says here."



Brain power: Akar pays with his life.

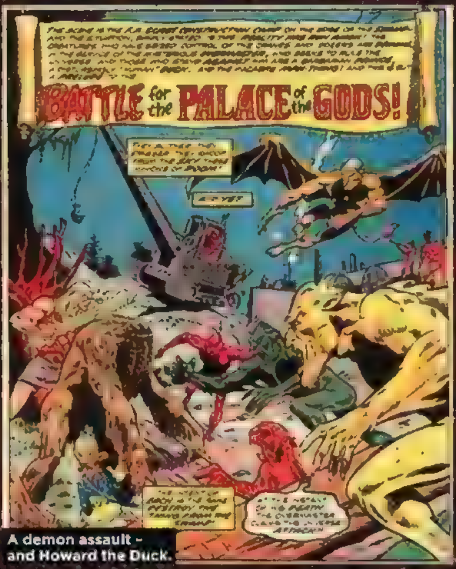
Even at a time when Marvel was as renegade and undisciplined as it would ever be, this comic was trippy, head-spinny stuff. When Man-Thing was given a second crack at his own book in 1979, under the aegis of writer Chris Claremont, the results were competent enough but could not recreate the intrinsic oddity and humaneness of the earlier version.

Since then, Man-Thing has bumbled through various titles such as *Marvel Comics Presents*, *Legion Of Monsters*, *Dark Avengers* and *Thunderbolts*, and also a third series of his own. He has been possessed by an otherworldly entity, bleached white, fought zombies as a member of the Midnight Sons, used as a kind of glorified teleportation device by the Thunderbolts, identified by Satana as something called 'the Vogornus Koth', and gifted with the power of speech. All in all, it seems that lots of writers love him – but no one has any real idea what to do with him.

That may be because Gerber's stamp is indelibly all over the character, and always will be. The care and love he expended on Man-Thing was evident throughout his run, right down to the lengthy text pages that betrayed his ambition to be a 'proper' author, the kind who does prose, not funnybooks.

LAZARUS RISING

Gerber died in 2008 of complications arising from pulmonary fibrosis, aged 60. His final, unpublished *Man-Thing* script appeared posthumously in 2012 as a three-issue miniseries, *The Infernal Man-Thing*, with painted art by Kevin Nowlan. Titled 'Screenplay Of The Living Dead Man!' it's a sequel to 1974's memorable 'Song-Cry... Of The Living Dead Man!'; in the earlier story, a writer, Brian Lazarus, is seen slowly cracking up in an abandoned insane asylum, driven mad by selling out his art in order to eke a living as an advertising copywriter. 'Screenplay...' picks up his story 30 years on, after he has made a hollow success of his life writing scripts for crappy TV cartoons and Hollywood potboilers.

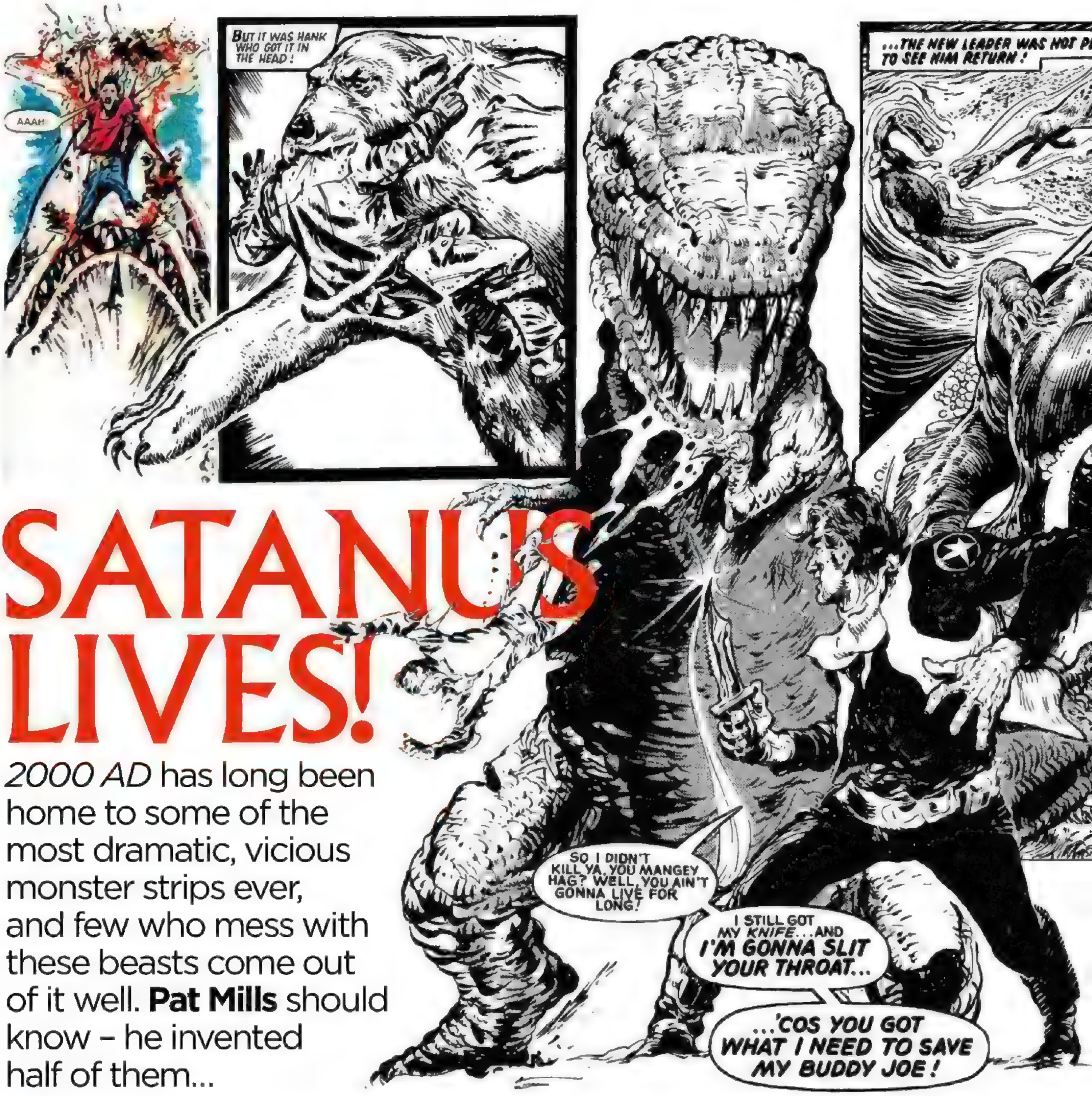

BATTLE for the PALACE of the GODS!

A demon assault – and Howard the Duck.

Lazarus seems very much a mouthpiece for Gerber, an on-the-page alter ego, railing against conformity, commercialism, the blandness of modern society, and the emptiness of lowest-common-denominator entertainment. And indeed, Gerber himself did his level best not to compromise or short-change his readership. He had an integrity and an honesty that may, at times, have been the despair of his employers – but resulted in some damn fine comics.

"We promise not to bog down, not to take the easy route," Gerber wrote in an editorial in *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #1. "We pledge to make each issue a new experience, for you and for us." It was a vow he amply fulfilled.

The original Steve Gerber run is available in ***Essential Man-Thing Vol 1; The Infernal Man-Thing*** *has been collected as a graphic novel too.*


AAAH!
BUT IT WAS HANK WHO GOT IT IN THE HEAD!
...THE NEW LEADER WAS NOT P
TO SEE HIM RETURN!
SO I DIDN'T KILL YA, YOU MANGEY HAG? WELL, YOU AIN'T GONNA LIVE FOR LONG!
I STILL GOT MY KNIFE... AND I'M GONNA SLIT YOUR THROAT...
...'COS YOU GOT WHAT I NEED TO SAVE MY BUDDY JOE!

SATANUS LIVES!

2000 AD has long been home to some of the most dramatic, vicious monster strips ever, and few who mess with these beasts come out of it well. **Pat Mills** should know – he invented half of them...

"Leopard takes prey up a tree to enjoy its meal," was a recent *Daily Mail* headline. The incredible photos showed the big cat dragging a dead gazelle up to the high branches where it could eat without being disturbed. It reminded me of Satanus the black tyrannosaur, in *Judge Dredd*'s 'The Cursed Earth', dragging his human victims up to the top of a church tower where he could similarly eat them in peace and quiet.

The humans were chained together, so they could see the awful fate awaiting them as, one by one, they were devoured. I'd got the idea from an article I'd read about a member of a prison chain gang who'd been dragged into a swamp by an alligator. His fellow convicts were also pulled in, and eventually consumed by the reptiles.

My interest in monster mayhem dates back to when I created *Action* comic in 1975/76, and my writer, Ken Armstrong, came up with the awesome *Jaws*-inspired great white shark Hook Jaw, impressively drawn by Ramon Sola. Impressive, because to give a fish personality in a comic is no easy feat. My favourite scene? When a diver is safe in his cage filming Hook Jaw, and a female great white gives birth and all these mini-Hook Jaws emerge, swim through the bars – and eat him alive! The readers loved it. I recall one female reader wrote in and said the jagged edges of her bedroom curtain looked like Hook Jaw's teeth, and every night she thought he was coming to get her. But she couldn't wait to buy next week's episode!

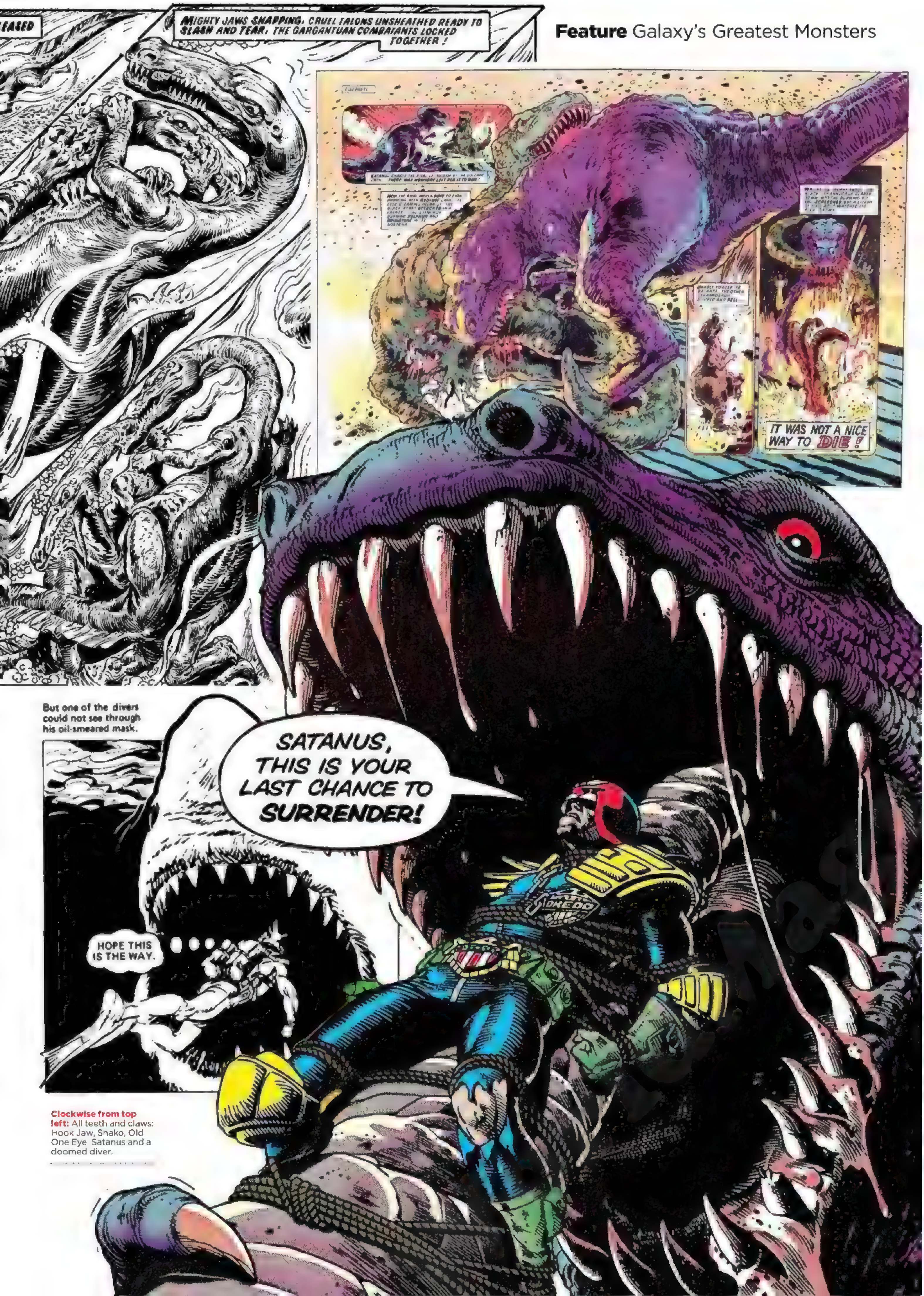
GREAT WHITE #2

So when I moved on to starting *2000 AD*, I thought about featuring another kind of great white. And so Shako, a monstrous polar bear, was born. Hunted by the CIA because he's swallowed a top secret poison capsule, he was as hungry and lethal as Hook Jaw. After writing episode one, I handed the serial over to John Wagner. Probably the best sequence – suggested to John by *Marshal Law* co-creator Kevin O'Neill (who else?) – is where a guy has a shower, reaches out for his fluffy white bath towel and grabs hold of Shako instead.

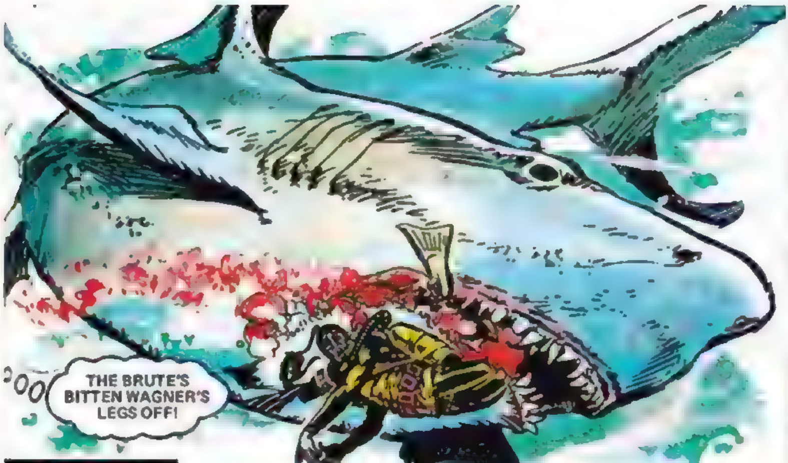
But I didn't think a polar bear had quite enough monster value (too cute looking, maybe?) for Prog One of *2000 AD*, so I wrote *Flesh* instead – a saga about time-travelling 23rd century cowboys who go back to the Cretaceous and farm dinosaurs. (No crazier than *Looper*, perhaps?) The star of *Flesh* was Old One Eye, a 120-year-old female T rex. One of the highlights is a scene, once again drawn by Sola, where a cowboy has to cut a gland out of her neck in order to save his buddy, Joe. That confrontation between man and monster is a classic.

But the most memorable moment for me was the epilogue, 65 million years after Old One Eye's death. Set in the present day, and

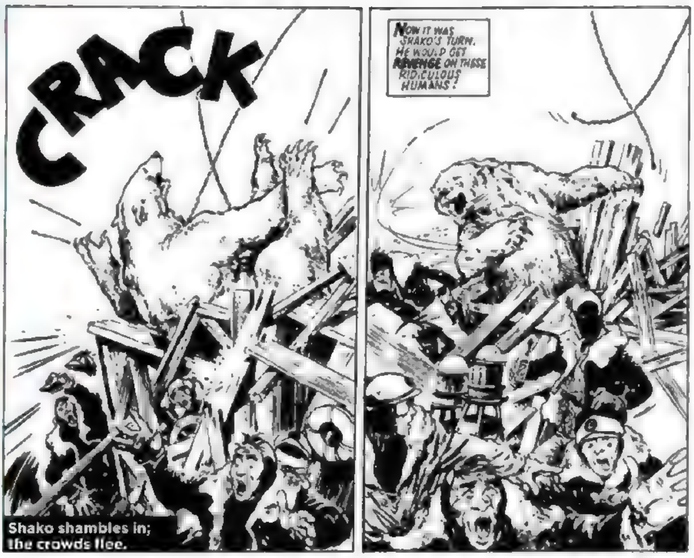
All images © 2012 Rebellion A/S


EASED
MIGHTY JAWS SNAPPING, CRUEL TALONS UNSHEATHED READY TO SLASH AND TEAR, THE GARGANTUAN COMBATANTS LOCKED TOGETHER!
IT WAS NOT A NICE WAY TO DIE!
But one of the divers could not see through his oil-smeared mask.
SATANUS, THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SURRENDER!
HOPE THIS IS THE WAY.

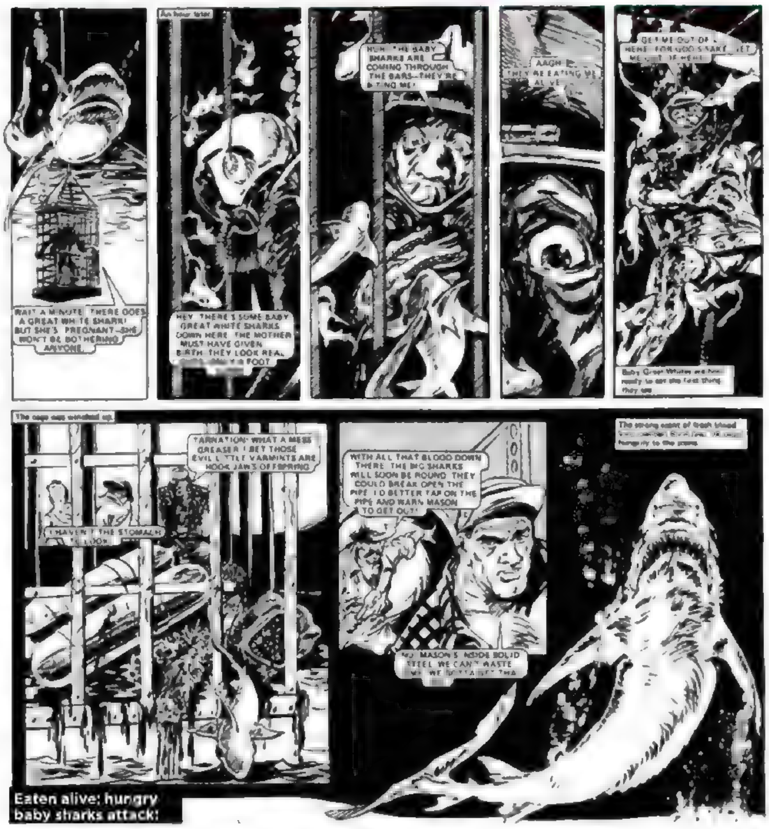
Clockwise from top left: All teeth and claws: Hook Jaw, Snako, Old One Eye, Satanus and a doomed diver.


THE BRUTE'S BITTEN WAGNER'S LEGS OFF!

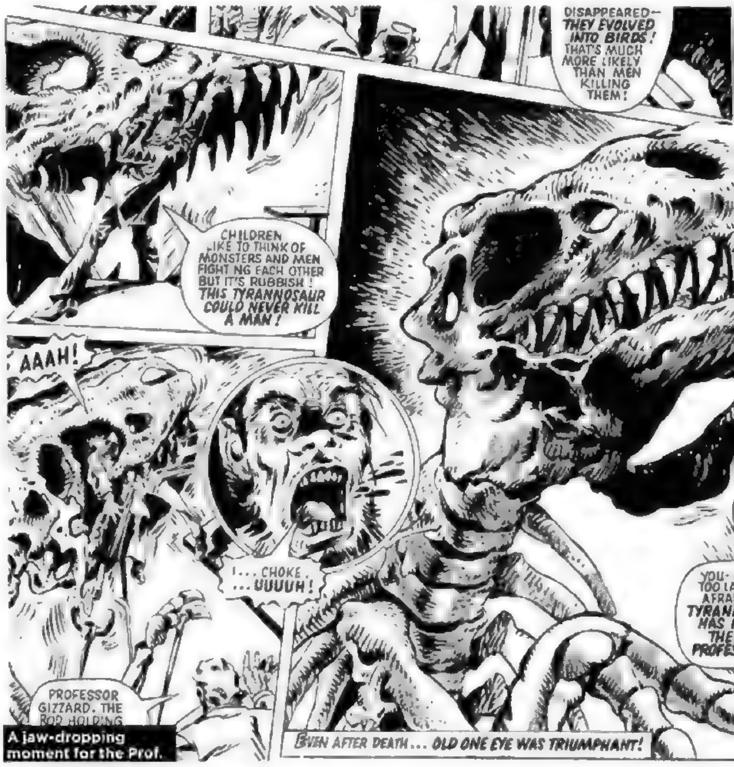
Hook Jaw gets a first taste of diver blood.


CRACK
NOW IT WAS SHAKO'S TURN. HE WOULD GET REVENGE ON THESE RIDICULOUS HUMANS!

Shako shambles in; the crowds flee.


WAIT A MINUTE! THERE GOES A GREAT WHITE SHARK! BUT SHE'S PREGNANT—SHE WON'T BE BOTHERING ANYONE.
An hour later
HEY! THERE'S SOME BABY GREAT WHITE SHARKS DOWN HERE! THE MOTHER MUST HAVE GIVEN BIRTH. THEY LOOK REAL
THE BABY SHARKS ARE COMING THROUGH THE BARS—THEY'RE EATING ME!
AAGH! THEY'RE EATING ME ALIVE!
GET ME OUT OF HERE! FOR GOD'S SAKE, GET ME OUT OF HERE!
TARNATION! WHAT A MESS, GREASER! I BET THOSE EVIL LITTLE VARMINTS ARE HOOK JAW'S OFFSPRING
I HAVEN'T THE STOMACH TO LOOK
WITH ALL THAT BLOOD DOWN THERE THE BIG SHARKS WILL SOON BE ROUND. THEY COULD BREAK OPEN THE PIPE. I'D BETTER TAP ON THE PIPE AND WARN MASON TO GET OUT!
NO! MASON'S INSIDE SOLID STEEL. WE CAN'T WASTE

Eaten alive; hungry baby sharks attack!


DISAPPEARED— THEY EVOLVED INTO BIRDS! THAT'S MUCH MORE LIKELY THAN MEN KILLING THEM!
CHILDREN LIKE TO THINK OF MONSTERS AND MEN FIGHTING EACH OTHER BUT IT'S RUBBISH! THIS TYRANNOSAUR COULD NEVER KILL A MAN!
AAAH!
...CHOKE ...UUUUH!
PROFESSOR GIZZARD. THE ROD HOLDING
EVEN AFTER DEATH... OLD ONE EYE WAS TRIUMPHANT!

A jaw-dropping moment for the Prof.

based on an authentic incident, scientists are having a dinner inside her fossilized remains. The arrogant scientist puts his head in her mouth and her teeth clamp down and kill him so that, "even in death, Old One Eye is triumphant!" No King Kong tragic monster deaths in the Millsverse! Nature is always the winner, never man.

MONSTER SAFARI

Missing writing *Flesh*, I later created Old One Eye's son, Satanus, and placed him in a Cretaceous theme park in the Cursed Earth. Powerfully drawn by Mike McMahon, he was *2000 AD*'s most popular monster. Many readers have asked me about the similarity between my theme park (appearing in *2000 AD* in 1978) and *Jurassic Park*, over a decade later, where dinosaurs are also reanimated and kept in a sort of safari park.

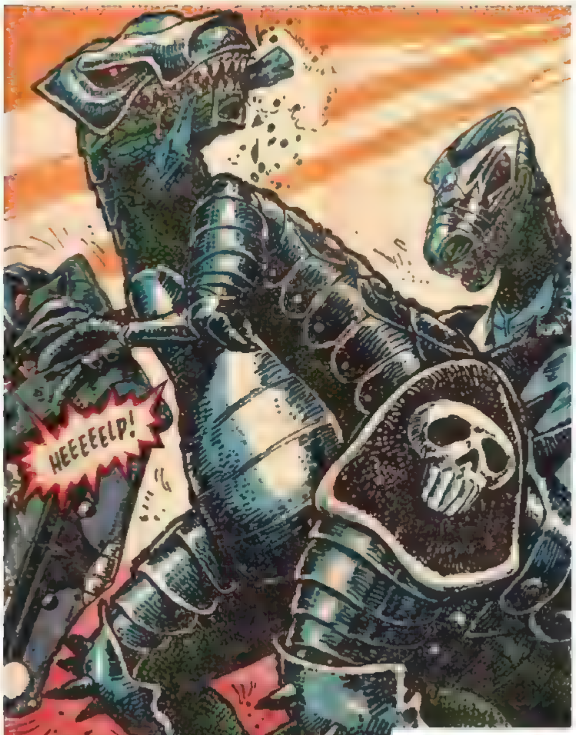
In fact, I was inspired by a story in *The Year's Best Science Fiction No.8*, edited by Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss (1976). It was entitled 'Paleontology: An Experimental Science', and written by Robert R Olsen. It's a very funny tale that describes in some detail how a T rex is recreated from a DNA sample, and mentions that the rex was kept in San Diego zoo. So I thought – why not a theme park? Just the kind of place Judge Dredd would drive through on his epic journey to Mega-City Two.

Satanus proved so popular, I later had him appear in *Nemesis* and also in a *Judge Dredd* storyline called 'The Blood Of Satanus', as well as, more recently, in the *Judge Dredd Megazine* in a Dredd saga entitled 'The Tenth Circle', drawn by the late John Hicklenton. Old One Eye's grandson Golgotha even features in *ABC Warriors*. Quite a family tree. And there was also *Dinosty* – illustrated by Clint Langley – where intelligent dinosaurs feast on human slaves.

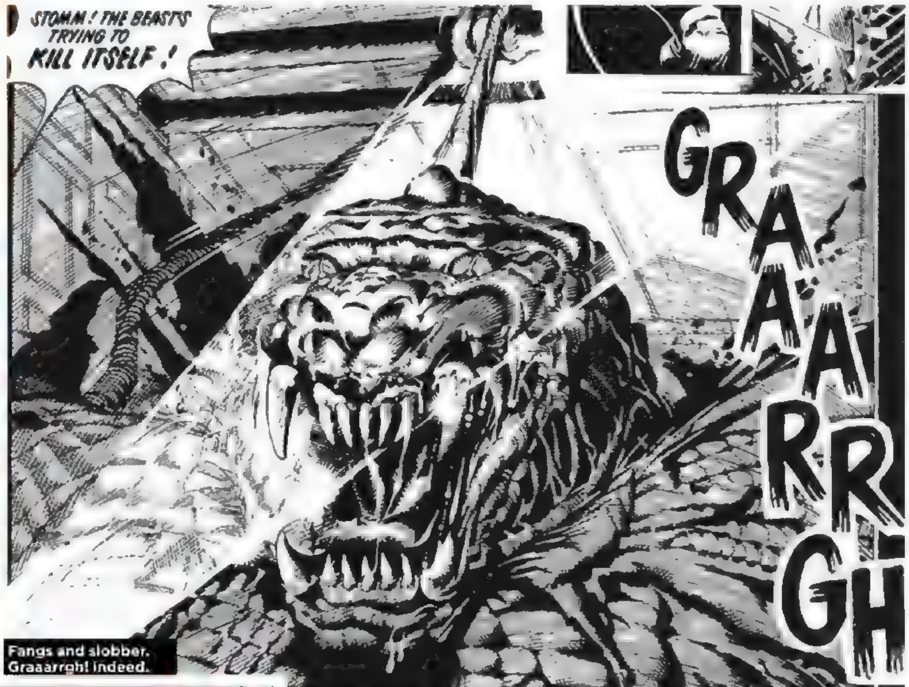
But I really wanted to get back to *Flesh*, which still has enormous monstrous potential, and today we have a true successor to Satanus: Gorehead, who has 666 branded accidentally on his face and is every bit as demonic as his predecessor. Artist James McKay is a worthy successor to Ramon, and is renowned for his authentic recreations of the Cretaceous. Gorehead's grinning juves – who look like a gang of dino-punks – are just as scary (and hungry) as those baby sharks in *Hook Jaw*. One of Gorehead's finest moments is when he kills and then eats his way inside an alamosaur. He sleeps off his meal curled up deep inside the sauropod so he can guard it from other predators, and also have a little snack when he wakes. After all, you can't drag an alamosaur up a tree – or a church.

Inevitably, desperate cowboys are looking for somewhere to hide from an impending

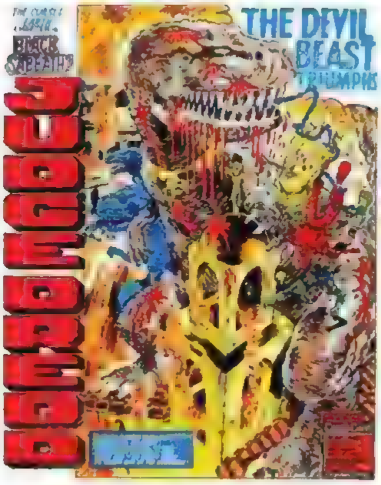
> **“ A guy has a shower, reaches out for his fluffy white bath towel and grabs Shako instead ”**

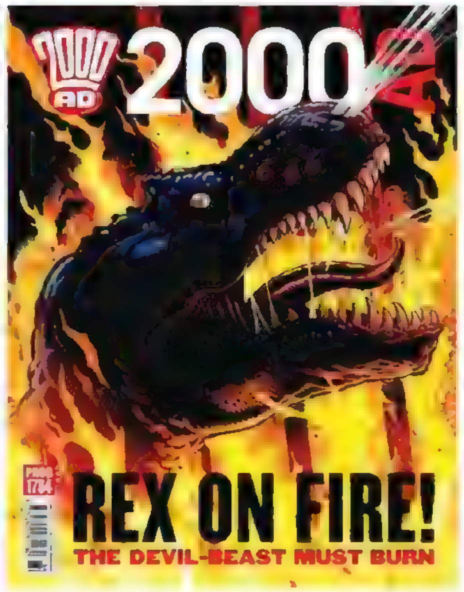


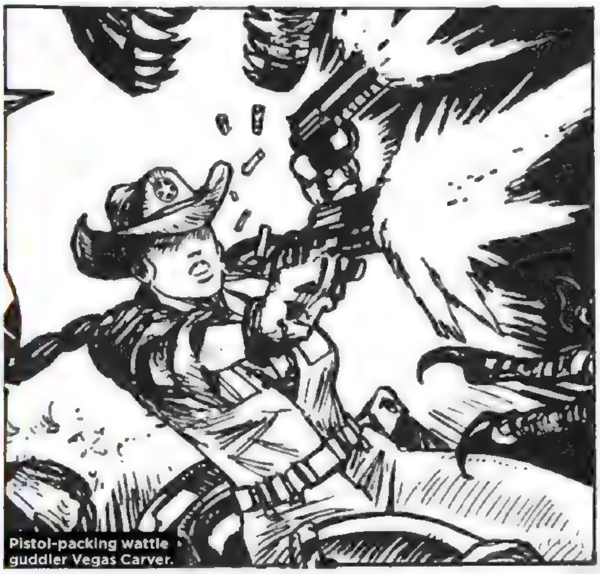
Golgotha's a real chip off the old block.


STOMM! THE BEAST'S TRYING TO KILL ITSELF!
GRAAARRGH

Fangs and slobber. Graaarrgh! indeed.







Pistol-packing wattle guddler Vegas Carver.

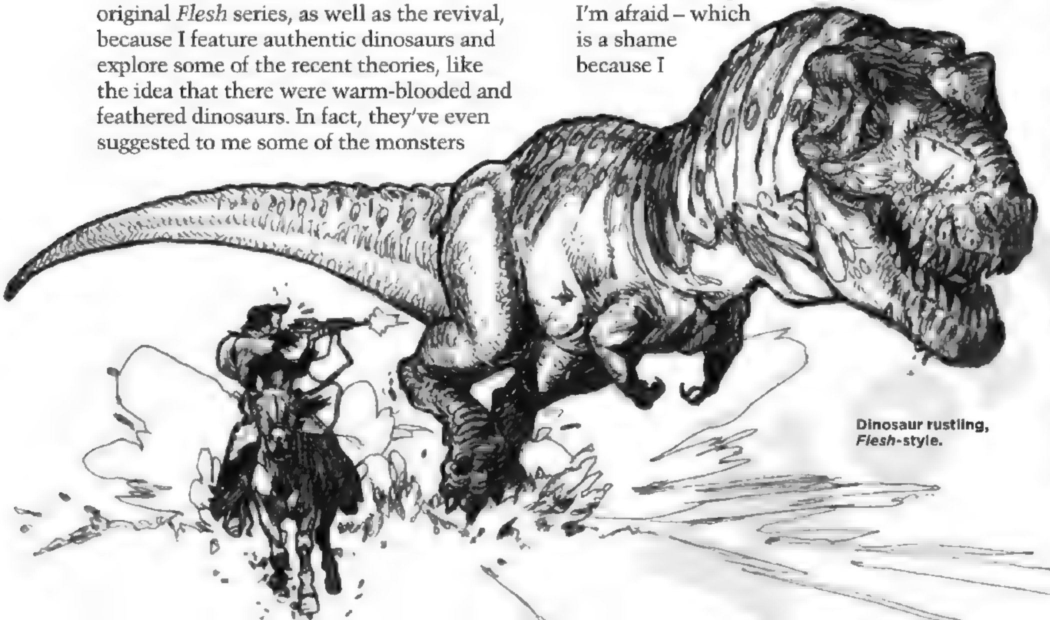
explosion and, yes, they also choose to cower deep inside the massive carcass. If you haven't seen the episode (now out in the graphic novel, *Flesh*) you can probably imagine what happens next. It's like a scene out of *Alien*. Gorehead is not pleased to meet the intruders.

Several paleontologists have rated my original *Flesh* series, as well as the revival, because I feature authentic dinosaurs and explore some of the recent theories, like the idea that there were warm-blooded and feathered dinosaurs. In fact, they've even suggested to me some of the monsters in the new series – such as the latest version of the quetzalcoatus. With its hellish wings and long, vicious beak, this water-based creature is a true sci-fi nightmare. It spears a naked cowboy and then devours him. (That'll teach him to go skinny-dipping!)

There are no plans to bring back Hook Jaw, I'm afraid – which is a shame because I have all sorts of scary ideas for him – however, there is one shark idea I'm using in *Flesh* instead. Apparently, it is perfectly possible to 'guddle' – catch fish by groping the banks of a stream – a shark! On a YouTube sequence, a diver caresses a shark, stroking it into a trance, as other sharks look on. It then 'stands' vertically in the water while it is being guddled.

Now no one (in their right mind) would ever guddle a great white, but in theory it could be done. So if you can guddle a great white, why not a T rex? And that is the scene in the next *Flesh* serial, 'Badlanders', appearing sometime in 2013.

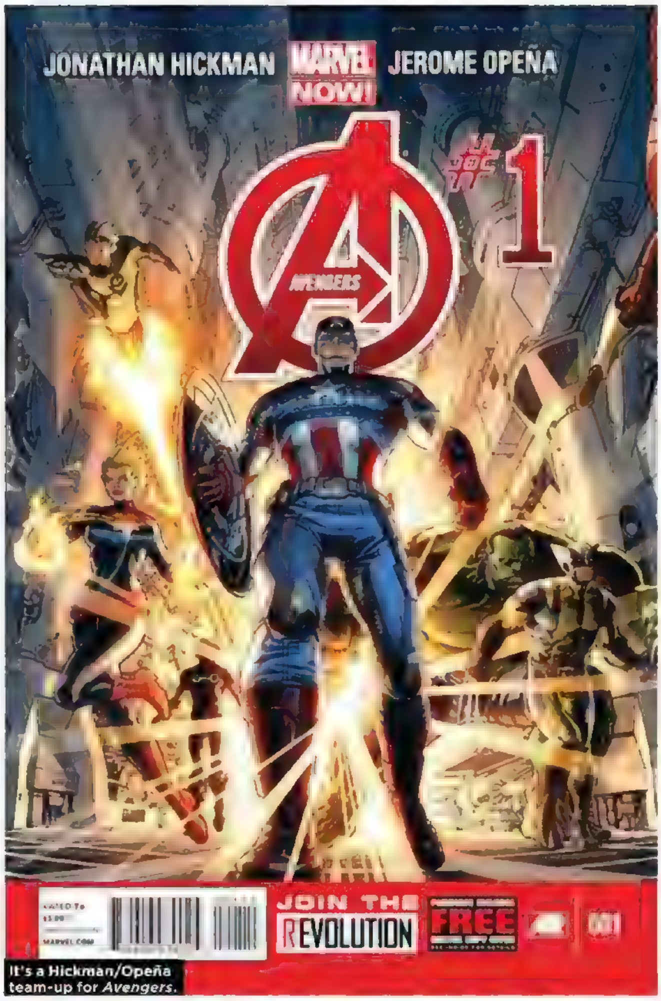
Claw Carver's beautiful daughter, Vegas Carver, has no option but to climb into a cage with Gorehead and guddle his wattle in order to complete her nefarious plans. A beauty and the beast sequence, reminiscent of *King Kong*. Yes, *Flesh* is still as monstrous and mad as ever. The spirit of Satanus lives on!



Dinosaur rustling, *Flesh*-style.

---

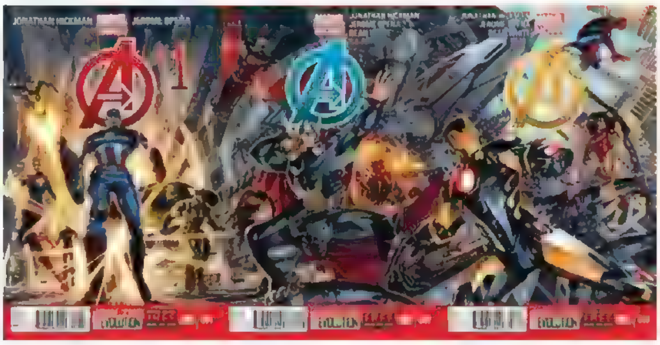
*Early **Flesh** tales are available in **Flesh: The Dino Files**, while the current series, **Shako** and others have been collected too.*


JONATHAN HICKMAN
MARVEL NOW!
JEROME OPEÑA
#1
AVENGERS
JOIN THE REVOLUTION
FREE

It's a Hickman/Opeña team-up for *Avengers*.

HICKMAN
EPTING
MAGYAR
D'ARMATA
MARVEL NOW!

NEW AVENGERS
#1
JONATHAN HICKMAN
RICK MAGYAR
MARVEL NOW!
STEVE EPTING
FRANK D'ARMATA


JONATHAN HICKMAN
JEROME OPEÑA
1

Not likely!

VENGEANCE IS MINE

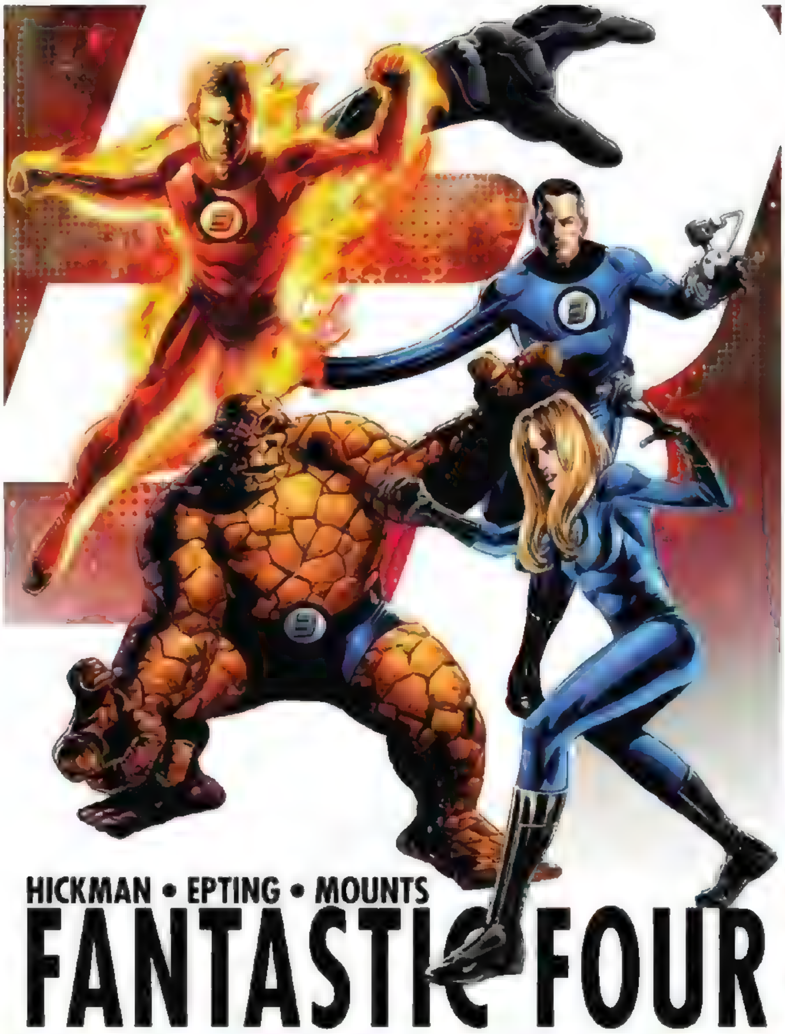
Marvel's Avengers family of titles has a new guiding hand: recent superstar writer Jonathan Hickman. **By Stephen Jewell**

Some acts are pretty damn hard to follow, and few more so than Brian Michael Bendis, arguably the dominant voice in modern superhero comics, with his high-concept, multi-hero epics, each given fresh life by an eclectic use of heroes and conversational speech patterns, distinctive to the point of self-parody.

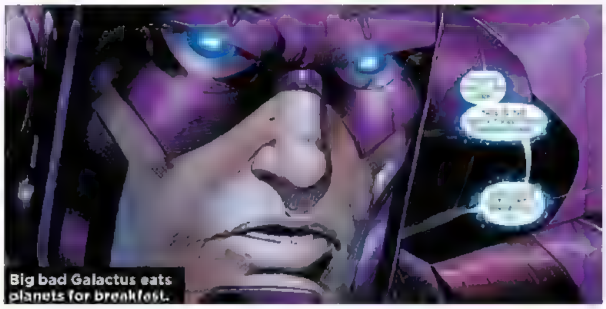
It was no minor question, then, as to who might be best placed to take over Marvel's premier superhero line as Bendis' eight-year tenure drew to a close recently, but one name quickly emerged as the obvious choice. After all, no one has been making waves with inventive, intricately structured superhero extravaganzas of late quite like Jonathan Hickman, whose ongoing *Fantastic Four* epic has, over the past couple of years, taken Marvel's original keystone title and catapulted it back to the sort of 'must read' status it once enjoyed under Lee, Kirby and others.

Somewhat startlingly, Hickman has come from more-or-less nowhere, a recent recruit to mainstream comics. After making his name writing and drawing minor Image titles like *The Nightly News* and *Transhuman*, the South Carolina-based author broke into the House of Ideas in early 2009, initially co-writing *Secret Warriors* with Bendis before flying solo.

But it was when he assumed the reins on *Fantastic Four*, later that year, that he really began stamping his mark on the Marvel U. In the sort of attention-seeking 'shock' move that's become de rigueur for a creator wanting to make an impact, he began by killing (and



It's the sad end of Hickman's *FF* world.


Big bad Galactus eats planets for breakfast.

FANTASTIC FOUR

Pizza? How about some clothes...?

later reviving) a major figure, in this case founding FF member Johnny Storm; thrillingly, though, this was only the beginning of an extended, multiverse-spanning three-year run that kept fans guessing, and dragged both new and lapsed readers back to the book.

Of course, all good things have to end, and – having trusted the ongoing exploits of the First Family to his fellow Marvel architect Matt Fraction with the advent of Marvel Now! – Hickman was recently given control of one of the few stages even bigger than the FF has now become. Hickman's Avengers residency begins now, and sees him joining forces with Jerome Opeña on the relaunched *Avengers* core title, before teaming up with his old *Fantastic Four* foil Steve Epting on the latest volume of companion mag *New Avengers*, starting in January.

One of the star attractions at New York Comic Con, Hickman found time in his hectic schedule of signings and panel appearances for a quick chat with *Comic Heroes* at an eerily empty Marvel booth late one afternoon…

> **“What better time to leave than when you feel like you've told your story?”**

Comic Heroes: Before we talk Avengers, tell us about leaving the good old FF. Come on, you must have shed a tear...?

Jonathan Hickman: I don't like using words like 'bittersweet', because they're kind of silly, but I loved working on the book and I hate leaving it, just as I'm excited about working on *Avengers*. To be honest, though, I think I've said just about everything I want to say about *Fantastic Four* at this point. I'm really happy with the work that we did, so what better time to leave than when you feel like you've told your story?

CH: It must be a daunting prospect succeeding Bendis on *Avengers*?

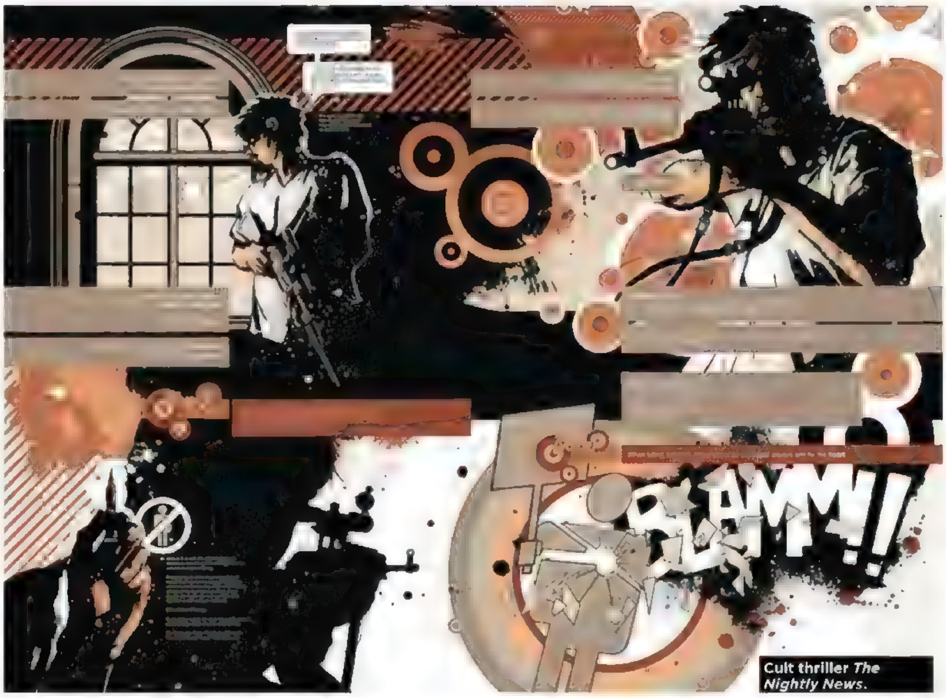
JH: Oh, it's a terribly big deal, obviously, but I've had Brian's support since I came into Marvel. The whole company is behind me, actually, but I feel confident that I'm going to be able to tell the story that I want to tell, and one that everybody seems excited about.

There's no getting around the fact, however, that Brian has had such a stellar run that people are going to be talking about it for a long time. I just hope they're not too disappointed with what I do, and I hope that they like it as much as they liked Brian's stuff. But I'm aware of what an incredibly difficult task it is I'm taking on here.

CH: Were you a big fan of *Avengers* growing up, as Brian was?

JH: No, and it's a lot like it was with the »

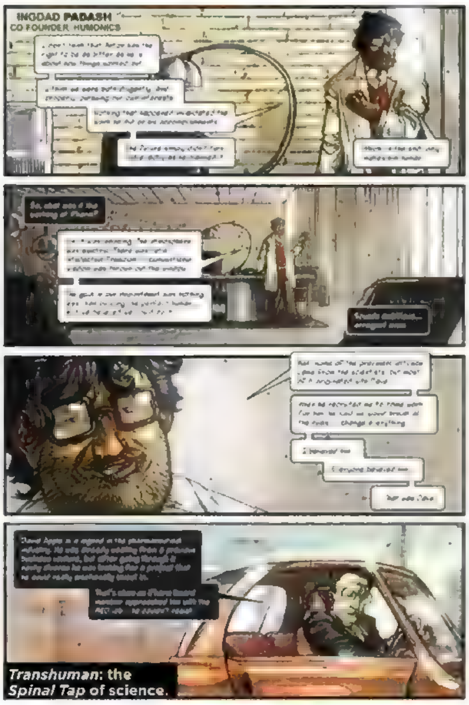
thenightly
NEWS
by jonathanhickman



Cult thriller *The Nightly News.*

TRANSHUMAN
TRANShuman
DIScovery : CONcept
JONATHANHICKMAN • JMRINGUET

Genetically modified monkeys. Be afraid.



Transhuman: the *Spinal Tap* of science.

Fantastic Four, in that it wasn't something that I was really into. I read things like the original *Secret Wars* back in the day, but I was generally more of an *X-Men* fan.

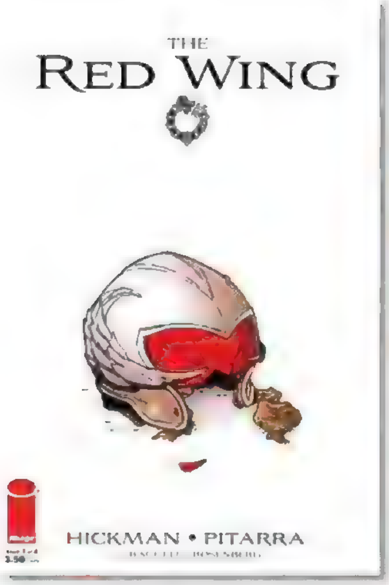
CH: That might be a good thing in some ways, though. We can imagine it might allow you to approach *Avengers* with a slightly cooler head, rather than being giddily thrilled at living a childhood dream...?
JH: I think that's a good way of looking at it. Analytical isn't the right word, and detached isn't either, but maybe I can at least be a little bit objective when I look at all that stuff.

CH: When you first scored the *Fantastic Four* assignment you extensively researched the old material, but you've said you didn't do that with the Avengers...
JH: Definitely not! With *Fantastic Four*, people still think about the old Kirby/Lee stuff as the whole point of what the book is all about. That's not quite the same with the current Avengers, largely because of the movie and the whole Hollywoodisation issue. I love all that classic *Avengers* stuff – at least, the little bits I've looked at recently – and I've fond memories of the stuff that I've read over the years, like the Chris Claremont/Michael Golden *Avengers Annual*, which was amazing. [He's referring to #10 from 1981, which famously features Ms Marvel and the debut appearance of Rogue.] But *Avengers* isn't the same thing now that it used to be, so I want to take that idea and push it in a different direction. We'll see how it goes.

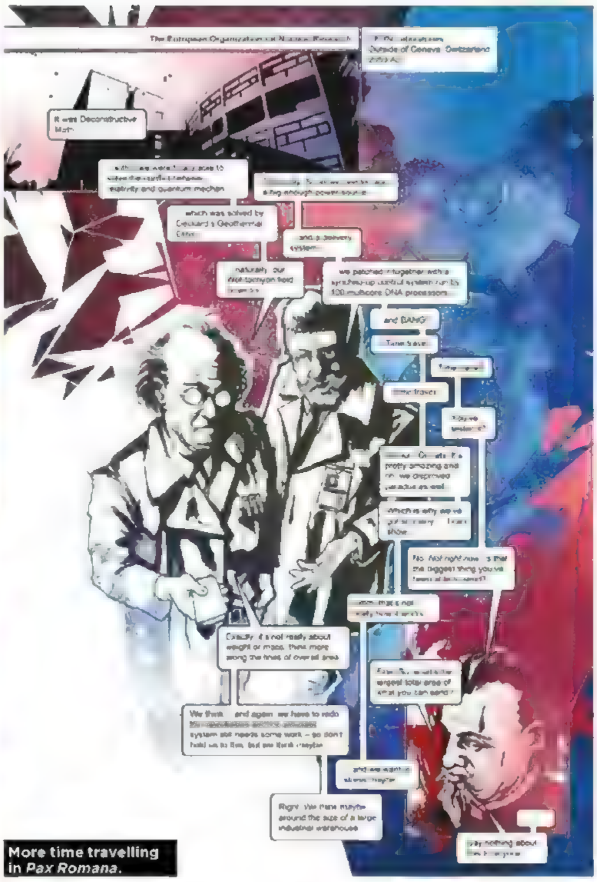
CH: Can we expect your *Avengers* run to turn into the sort of labyrinthine, cosmic epic that your *Fantastic Four* stint did?
JH: Oh, absolutely! I've been given the rope to do the kind of story that I want to do, largely because of how I handled *Secret Warriors* and, later, *Fantastic Four*. The expectation is that I come on the book and do something big and detailed, and that has pay-offs that are set up well in advance. We're definitely building towards something here…

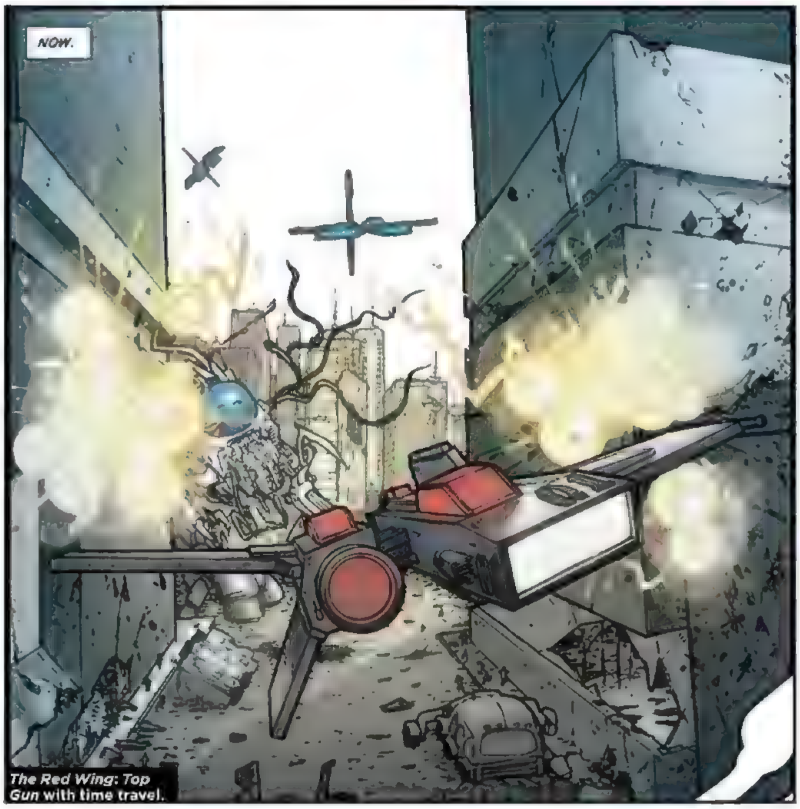
CH: How will you split your story between *Avengers* and *New Avengers*?
JH: *Avengers* is the 'Big A' Avengers, as we're calling it, and *New Avengers* is the Illuminati. The way it works is that the Illuminati know everything that the Avengers are doing, but the Avengers don't know everything that the Illuminati are doing. So you've got these two tracks that are building towards the same destination, but from different perspectives; it's a very deliberate type of structure that we've set up.

CH: Are you using the devastating aftermath of *Avengers Vs X-Men* as a specific springboard, and how closely are you connecting what you do with what Rick Remender and John Cassaday are up to on *Uncanny Avengers*?
JH: My *Avengers* book is not dependent on *Avengers Vs X-Men*, and neither is *New Avengers*, as they both have very clear starting points. But some of that stuff is in there, as there's no getting away from the fact that



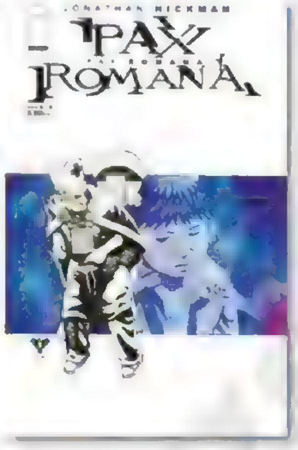
RED WING
JONATHAN HICKMAN • NICK PITARRA
DELCOURT


More time travelling in *Pax Romana*.



The Red Wing: *Top Gun* with time travel.

JONATHAN HICKMAN
PAX ROMANA
I CONSTANTINE



Namor drowned a whole lot of Wakanda in *AvX*, so he and Black Panther are obviously going to have issues. And Iron Man and Captain America are going to have issues of their own too.

As for *Uncanny Avengers*, I know where Rick is going and he knows where I'm going. But Rick is doing his own thing, and so he should be. And Rick is on fire right now!

CH: With an 18-strong opening line-up, your Avengers team could have an even mightier roster than Bendis was juggling, with stalwarts like Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, Hulk, Captain Marvel and Black Widow now joined by the less commonly-used likes of Shang-Chi and even Cannonball...

JH: There'll be 24 members when we get to where we're headed. It's like the Legion of Super-Avengers! But I like doing team books. I like moving the pieces around, and I like how the different characters all serve different purposes. What I especially like about the Avengers is that we have these archetypal big guys, like Thor and Captain America, and then there are these other people who revolve around that and look up to them.

CH: Bendis is renowned for his witty, rambling dialogue. Will you be emulating the extended family atmosphere that pervaded his Avengers?

JH: I think my dialogue will be sharp; it normally is, but I don't know if it will be quite as conversational. If you like, my *Avengers* will be less like a play, and more like a movie or a TV show. I'm not going to do what Brian did, because I don't think anyone can be a better Bendis than Bendis already is.

CH: You're also doing creator-owned work for Image, including *The Manhattan Projects* series with artist Nick Pitarra, who also drew your *Red Wing* limited series last year...

JH: People seem to love that book. It's selling incredibly well, and the trade was in the black before we even printed it, which I'm incredibly thankful for.

CH: *The Manhattan Projects* is set in an alternate '40s, and embroils real-life figures such as Albert Einstein, Wernher von Braun and Richard Feynman in a paranormal conspiracy involving aliens and time travel. We're guessing you like being a little cheeky with this real-life stuff, right?

JH: I certainly like being disrespectful! It's like white-collar naughty, and it's a lot of fun. The other joy, of course, is that Nick is a great artist, and he's really good to work with.

But the thing about *The Manhattan Projects* is that it's different from everything else that I've ever done, in that it's all really spur of the moment. It's about raw creativity, and it's not planned out at all. The book is literally about what inspires me, and whatever is going on in my life that particular month. It's just what tickles my fancy. I have no idea about what's coming up, and that's the cool thing about it. CH

---

*Remender and Cassaday's **Uncanny Avengers** is reviewed on page 100.*

HIDDEN
GEMS

CONCRETE ROCKS

One of comics' most individual, thoughtful and well-realised strips happens to feature a huge rock monster, but he never terrorises anybody, rarely rampages. **By Matt Bielby**

The quite spectacular 1986 has long been accepted as the single greatest year in comic history – certainly since 1962, the first full year of the modern Marvel Comics, which saw the launch of *Spider-Man*, *Hulk* and *Thor* – for reasons big (*Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, *Watchmen*, *Maus*, Byrne's reinvented *Superman* and Shooter's *New Universe*) and small. Amongst the 'smaller' events was the launch of Dark Horse Comics out of Mike Richardson's Oregon comic book store, Pegasus Books; well-packaged, professionally promoted black-and-whites were its thing, with *The Mask* an early hit. Alongside it: Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*, which was Marvel's The Thing played for real.

Chadwick was a movie storyboard guy (he worked on *The Big Easy*, and *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*), and his storytelling was strong from the start. His hero was a regular guy – one Ron Lithgow, a political speech writer and wannabe artist – whose mind is placed in the hulking, near-indestructible body of a stone monster by aliens, then abandoned in the Pacific North West to get on with things. (The aliens are never heard from again.)

With no Reed Richards to help, or Doctor Doom to cope with, his adventures were low key but smartly written, with real heart. (Imagine a Sundance-troubling indie film – that just happens to feature a rock-monster as its lead.)

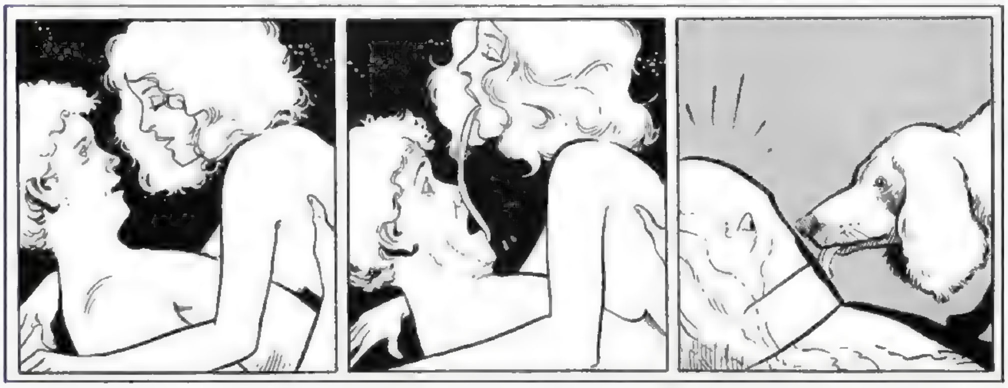
MOUNTAIN MAN

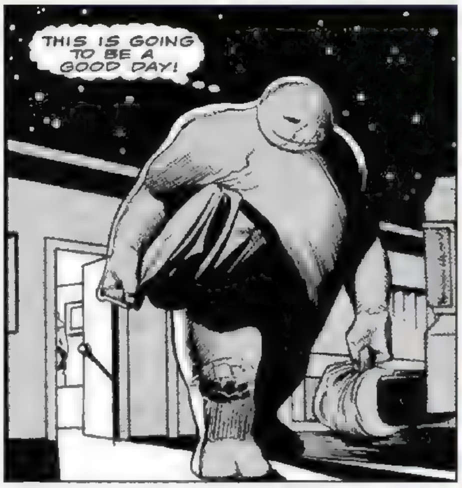
Naturally, our guy becomes alienated and isolated, but his rages are few: instead *Concrete*'s about slow acceptance of a new status quo, about building up a viable support network, and about coping with all life's mundane practicalities, such as finding a seat that'll support him (a throne of breeze blocks eventually suffices).

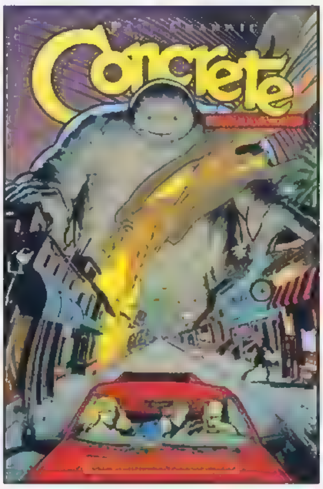
Whereas Ben Grimm had been the subject of much smutty fan speculation – what exactly did he keep in his blue FF trunks, and how would poor blind Alicia react to it? – with Concrete the problem was clear. He wore nothing, he had nothing, and sexual frustration must be added to his list of persistent, but ultimately modest, problems. (That Maureen Vonnegut, the scientist testing his body's limits, is such a hottie doesn't help, of course.)

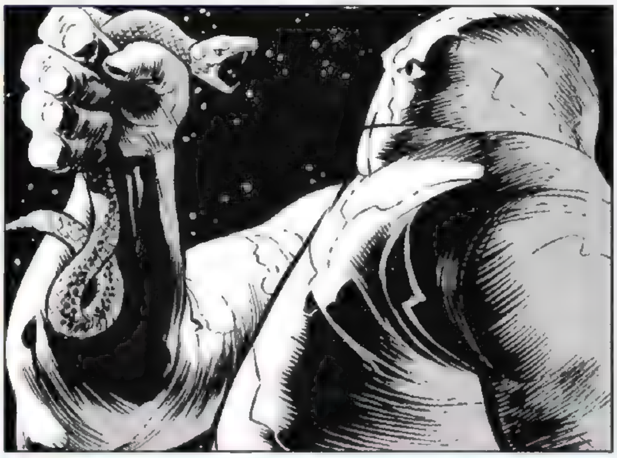
But though the annoyances are huge – Ron no longer seems to have a sense of touch, for instance, and he's constantly breaking things like telephones and doors – there are upsides too. He can see like an eagle, climb the tallest mountains unaided, or walk the seabed for hours on end, no need to breathe. He requires an assistant, Larry, to help him with mundane tasks, though, and he is aware that he exists at the constant mercy of the US government, who've provided him with the cover story that he's an experimental US cyborg.

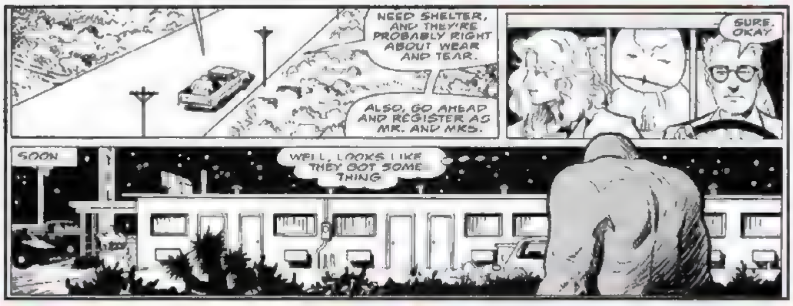
This is no SF story, save for in the initial set-up, but rock monster as dramatic character. Not an adventure strip, much of *Concrete* was essentially conversation-based domestic comedy. The problems presented are practical, like how will he earn a living?

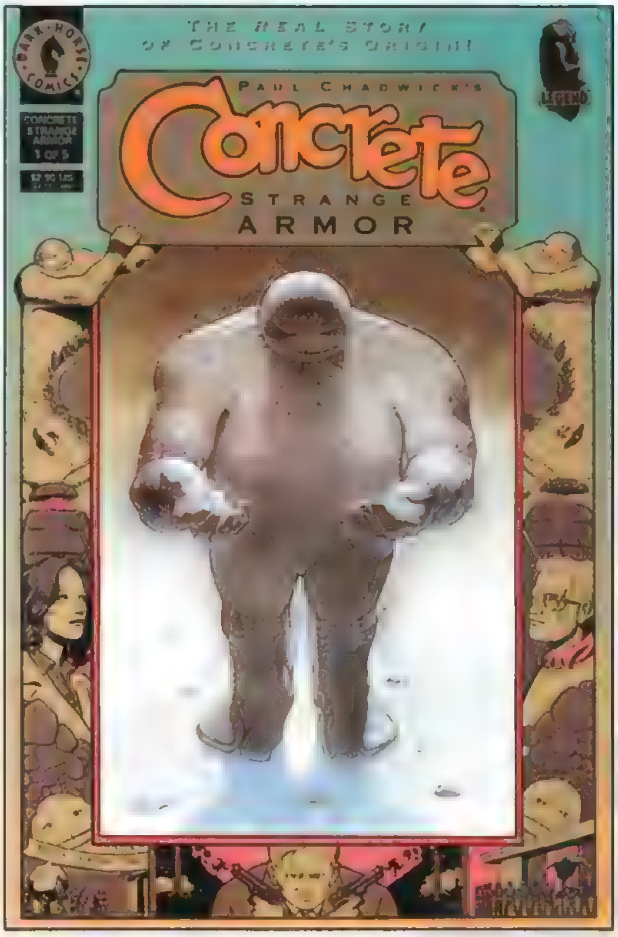


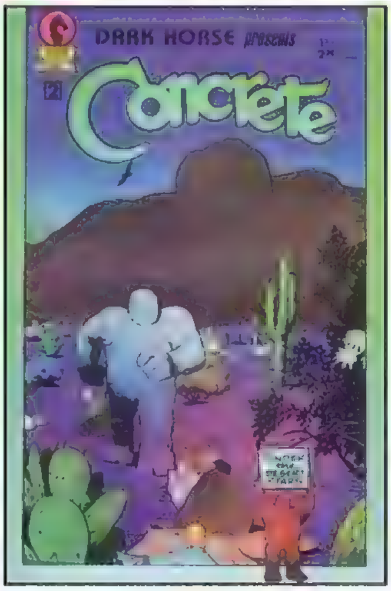

THIS IS GOING TO BE A GOOD DAY!

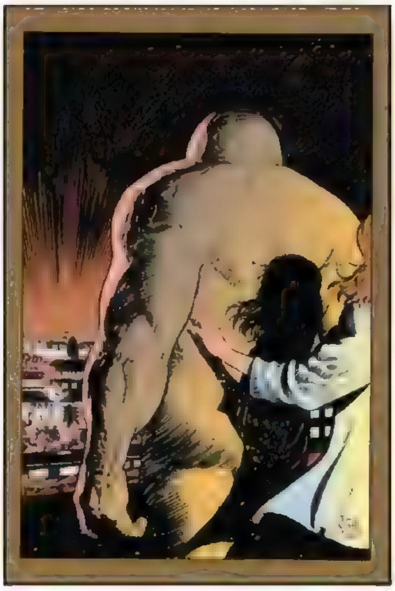





NEED SHELTER, AND THEY'RE PROBABLY RIGHT ABOUT WEAR AND TEAR.
SURE. OKAY
ALSO, GO AHEAD AND REGISTER AS MR. AND MRS.
SOON
WELL, LOOKS LIKE THEY GOT SOME THING


THE REAL STORY OF CONCRETE'S ORIGIN!
DARK HORSE COMICS
LEGEND
PAUL CHADWICK'S
Concrete
STRANGE ARMOR


DARK HORSE presents
Concrete



Concrete began with a hit 10-issue series, and then a miniseries every couple of years through the '90s. Chadwick was anything but prolific, but the stories were worth the wait: well-structured, with good dialogue and a surprising degree of tension. And they got better, especially when the slightly cloying sensitivity and on-the-nose eco-warrior aspects of early issues got toned down. His art is consistently good – unflashy, but it flows perfectly and boasts constantly pleasing linework and a strong use of solid blacks.

When making a political point, he's normally scrupulous in presenting both sides of the argument – though we're rarely in much doubt as to where Chadwick's sympathies lie – and Concrete himself constantly worries about the consequences of his attempts to do the right thing. He's a soulful boulder, surprising expression coming from his slit of a mouth and tiny, buried, so-human eyes; Chadwick sometimes paints non-comic book canvases of his hero too, often placing him small in lush natural settings.

BUILDING BLOCKS

As *Concrete* has developed, no major shock changes – like, say, to his colour! – have affected the flow in any way, but Chadwick's art has grown in subtle ways. His depiction of the natural world, placing Concrete in landscapes of tall trees and distant water, has started to include trademark shots with the 'camera' at ground level, with much of the panel taken up showing the worms and bugs scurrying about underground. He'll regularly draw lots of small panels showing not much happening to depict the passage of time, and is unafraid of such 'old fashioned' mechanisms as thought bubbles, so rare these days.

Concrete has won various awards, including five or six Eisners in the late '80s, but there's not been much new material for over a decade. Chadwick has long promised a prose novel, and another full series is apparently on its way, but now long overdue. When either eventually show we will, of course, be first in line. **CH**

Above: The stony exterior encases a very human heart; despite the aliens in #1, *Concrete* tackles real-world issues

---

*A series of **Concrete** collections are available from Dark Horse.*

Image © Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons

DEAD RECKONING

As creator of the most successful independent comic of recent years – and inspiration for one of the biggest cult TV shows of recent memory – Robert Kirkman has become one of the comic industry's true superstars, and all on his own terms...

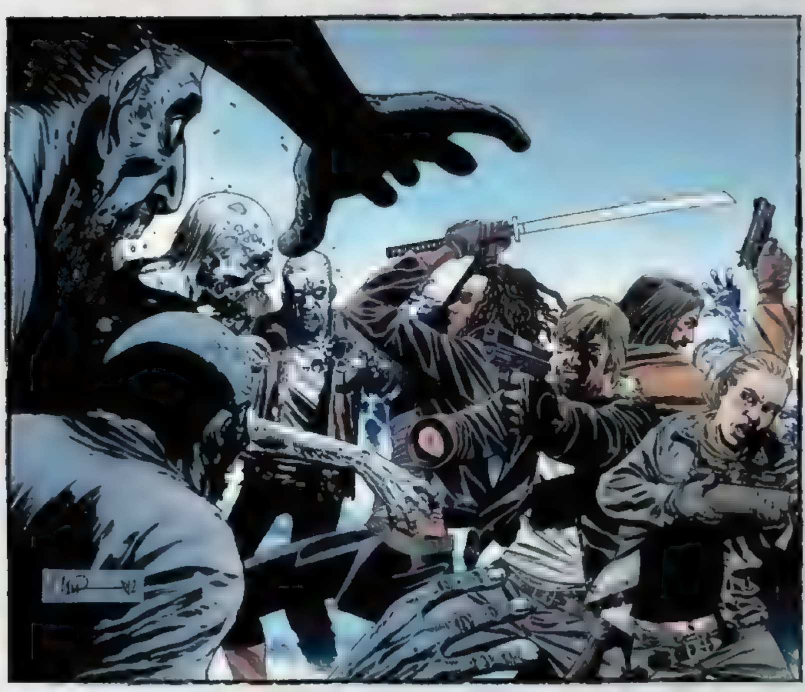
By Stephen Jewell

With most of the Javits Center's 125,000-strong capacity apparently trying to get into the main IGN Theatre for Saturday night's star-studded *The Walking Dead* panel, this year's New York Comic Con surely belonged to AMC's popular zombie drama. And with the majority of the Skybound half of the Image stand devoted to selling its numerous collected editions – along with various associated merchandise, including a particularly cool Ramones-inspired T-shirt for 'The Remains' – Robert Kirkman and Charlie Adlard's monthly comic book version isn't doing too shabbily either. It's no wonder that fans mob Kirkman every time he emerges from the store room-cum-meeting area.

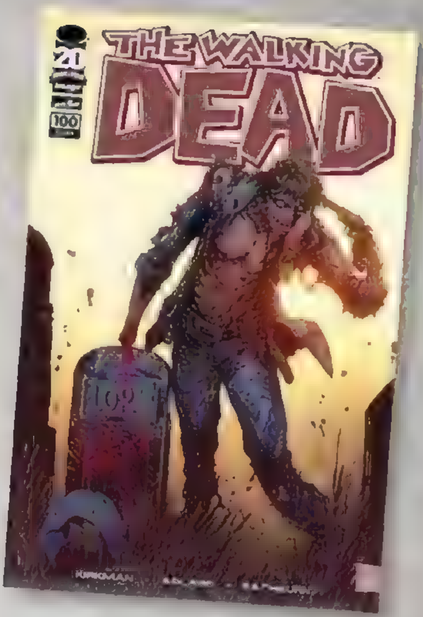
Fortunately, *Comic Heroes* was invited backstage for a chat with the Kentucky-born writer, who is still reeling not just from the TV series' impressive performance, but also the phenomenal success of *The Walking Dead* #100. Released with eight variant covers by the likes of Frank Quitely and Sean Phillips in the summer, it has since sold more than 380,000 copies, making it the biggest-selling comic book of the millennium so far.

"I had a number in my head that I thought it would do – because I knew #100 would sell more than the regular issues – but it ended up doing almost four times that," reflects Kirkman. "I never would have expected that in a million years, and it's all down to Charlie's art."

Kirkman is quick to praise his Shrewsbury-based partner-in-crime, who took over from original artist



Left: A sword-wielding, big-haired Michonne does some damage to the zombie hordes.



Tony Moore with #7 in 2004. "I don't want to gush too much because he'll get a big head," he laughs, displaying some of the sardonic wit that is evident in *The Walking Dead*'s grave-black humour. "Honestly, I admire his professionalism. He covers my ass quite a bit – more so than I'd care to admit! *The Walking Dead* has continued to come out monthly in the face of the show and no one has ever really done that before. Everyone else who has gotten a TV show has then gone, 'We'll do six issues a year, or maybe no issues. We'll get to it when we get to it!' The fact that we've been able to do what we have is more because of Charlie Adlard than me."

While he describes him as a proverbial workhorse, Kirkman insists that Adlard has other qualities apart from being super-fast and ever reliable. "He's probably one of the best artists working in comics today," he continues. "He does some absolutely stunning work. I love looking back at the old issues and noticing the evolution of his style, and just how much it's changed. He's also always up for anything and he puts up with a lot of BS. *The Walking Dead* has become this massive machine where it's like, 'We need a drawing for a Michonne action figure right now, can you do it really quickly?' He's like, 'I guess so'. He always pulls out all the stops. I owe a lot to Mr Adlard."

Adlard will celebrate a milestone of his own early next year with the release of *The Walking Dead* #106, which marks a century of issues on the book. "I can't stop hearing about it!" declares Kirkman sarcastically. "We're going to do something special for it. We'll do an extra cover »

> **"There are probably less than 10 people in comics that have done 100 consecutive issues together"**

> **“ The Governor could turn out to be one of the most popular characters of the season! ”**

and some marketing around that. Charlie needs to have his anniversary as well. There are probably less than 10 people in the history of comics that have done 100 consecutive issues of a comic book together. It's pretty remarkable!"

HAIR-RAISING

Now based in Los Angeles, Kirkman currently divides his time between his comic work and his executive producer/scriptwriter position on the TV show.

"I'm in the writers' room so I'm able to police things to a certain extent," he says. "There was a day earlier this year when we were deciding whether or not Michonne would have the big hair and I had to fight for that. Much to (actor) Danai Gurira's displeasure – it's somewhat hot in Georgia, so it's a little uncomfortable, but thankfully she's gotten used to it. I need to buy her a cake or something for putting up with it just for the sake of looking iconic. But all the characters are being handled pretty well and I'm very happy with how it's going. More importantly, the fans are really going to love the third season."

As for Season Three's other newcomer, Kirkman is pleased with how David Morrissey has come to embody the malevolent presence of the Governor. "Listen, he's British but I try not to hold that against him and luckily I can ignore it as both him and Andrew Lincoln (Rick Grimes) speak with American accents whenever I'm around them on set," he says with another gleeful smirk, conceding that the Governor is not the most sympathetic of protagonists.

"It was very difficult to find an actor for the part because he's so complicated – it's kind of like playing four different characters at once, which you'll see as the series progresses. You also have to play someone who is despicable and does horrible things, and not a lot of actors want to do that, as they don't want to be disliked. But David has brought a lot of wisdom to the role. He knows that there's such a thing as loving to hate a villain and he's definitely doing that in spades! The Governor could turn out to be one of the most popular characters of the season, despite being someone that you might want to see killed. David has really embraced the role and made it his own. The TV Governor is definitely David Morrissey. He's doing a fantastic job!"

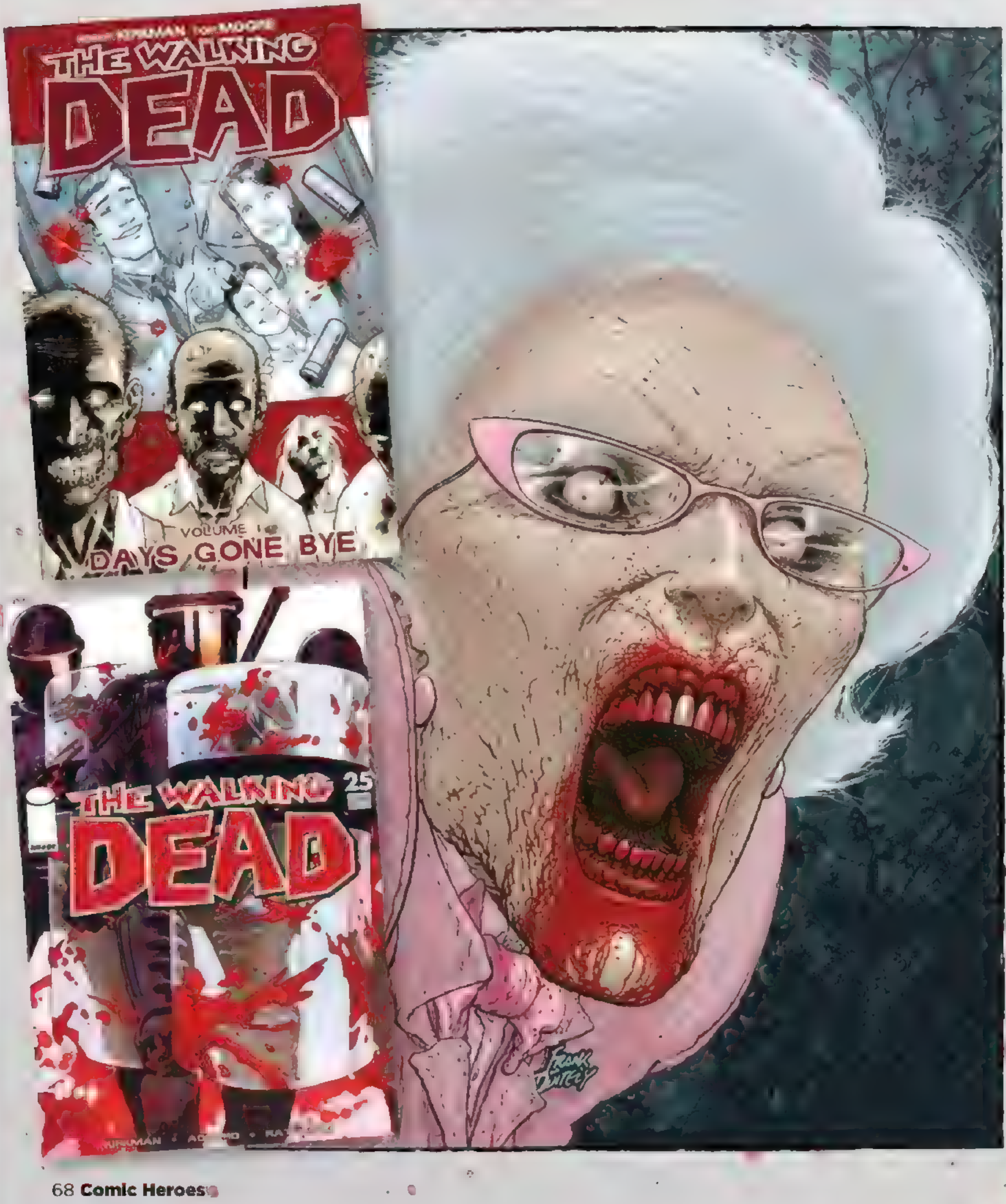
The TV series is several years behind the comic's continuity, and Kirkman admits that avoiding revealing any forthcoming plot spoilers to those who have seen the show, but not read the monthly book, can be a fine balancing act. "Sometimes it can seem like a bit too much *Walking Dead* because I spend my days working on the show and then my nights and early mornings on the comic," he says. "But the characters have been living in the comic for much longer than they have in the show, so even someone who exists concurrently in both, like Rick Grimes, isn't the same Rick Grimes in the show and the book. I'm very mindful of that when I bounce back and forth between writing them. The fact that the respective stories are at different stages makes it a little easier. If they were happening concurrently – if I was writing #20-30 now while also working on the same storyline in the show – that would be a little harder."

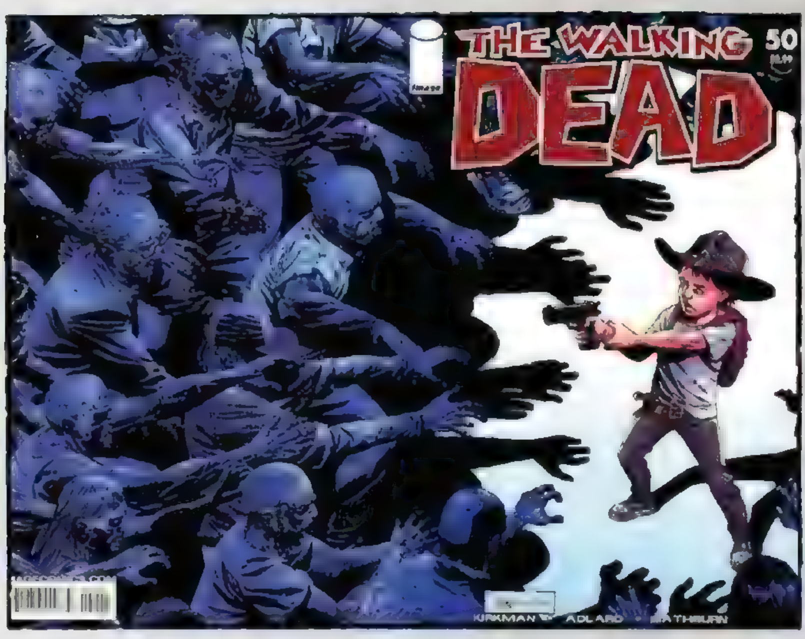
FLIRTING WITH DISASTER

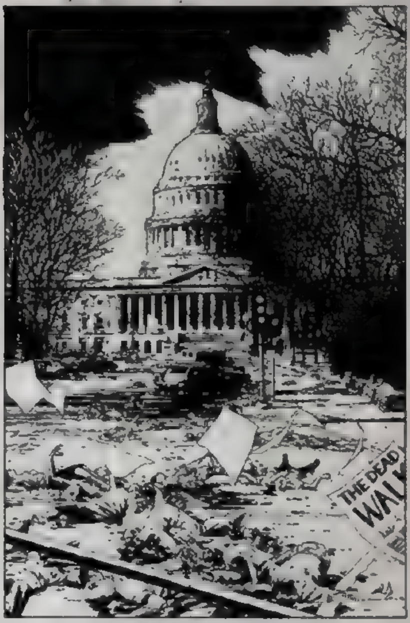
Rather ominously – the Javits Center was flooded in the wake of Superstorm Sandy just a couple of weeks after we met – Kirkman reveals that he has taken some inspiration from the human response to numerous real-life disasters. "Katrina helped a lot," he says. "I was already working on *The Walking Dead* when that happened but it was really useful seeing what happens when civilisation basically crumbles. In an isolated area, that was pretty much what happened. The infrastructure was gone and people were left to their own devices."

If the comics and TV weren't enough, Kirkman has also co-written two *Walking Dead* novels with author Jay Bonansinga, with the second volume *Road To Woodbury* released in October. "They tie in exclusively with the comics and are definitely in canon," says Kirkman. "They're the back story for the comic book Governor and there are a few little hints of things that happen in the

Below: Frank Quitely's pink-clad Nancy Reagan-alike zombie for the cover of *The Walking Dead* #100





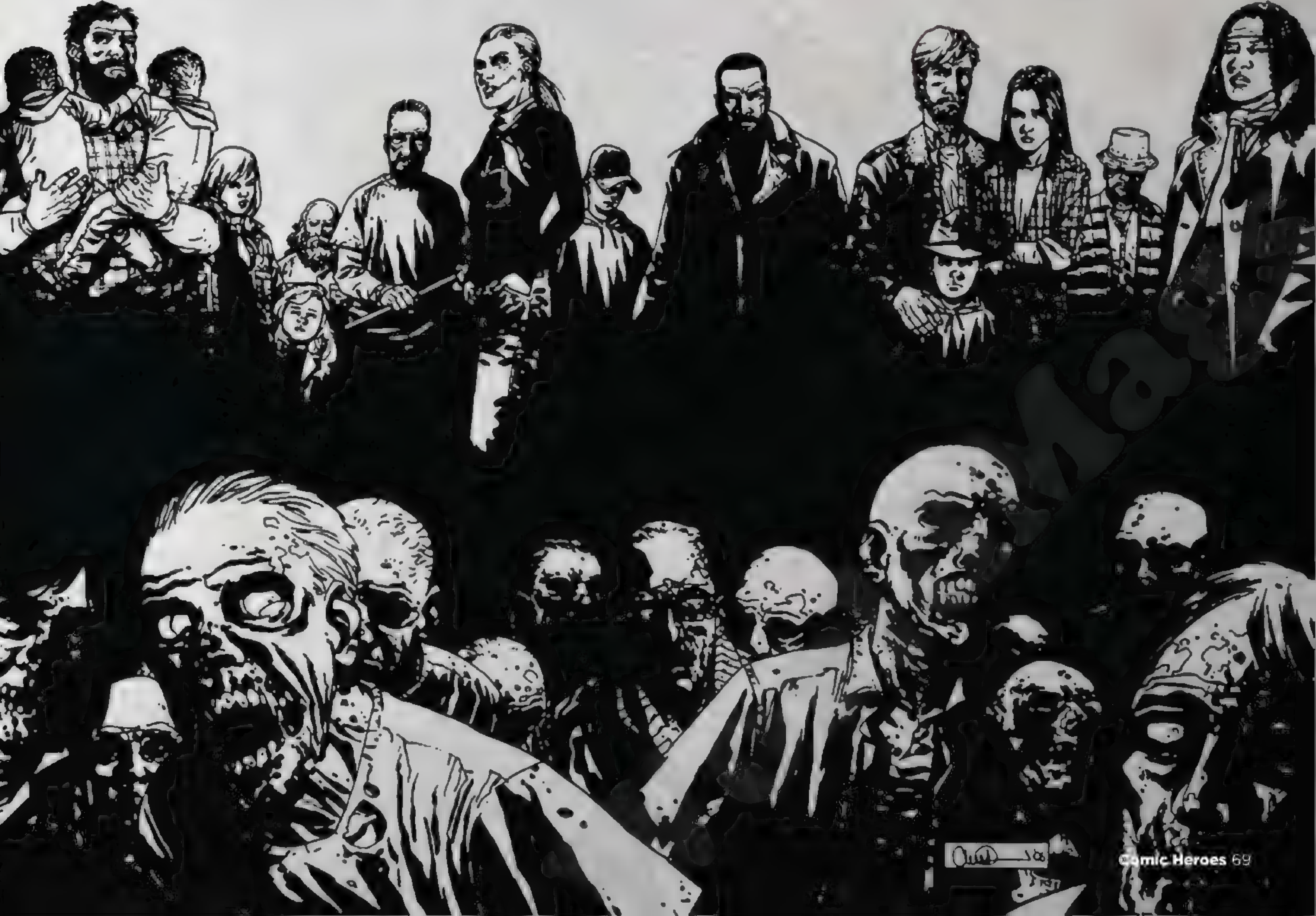


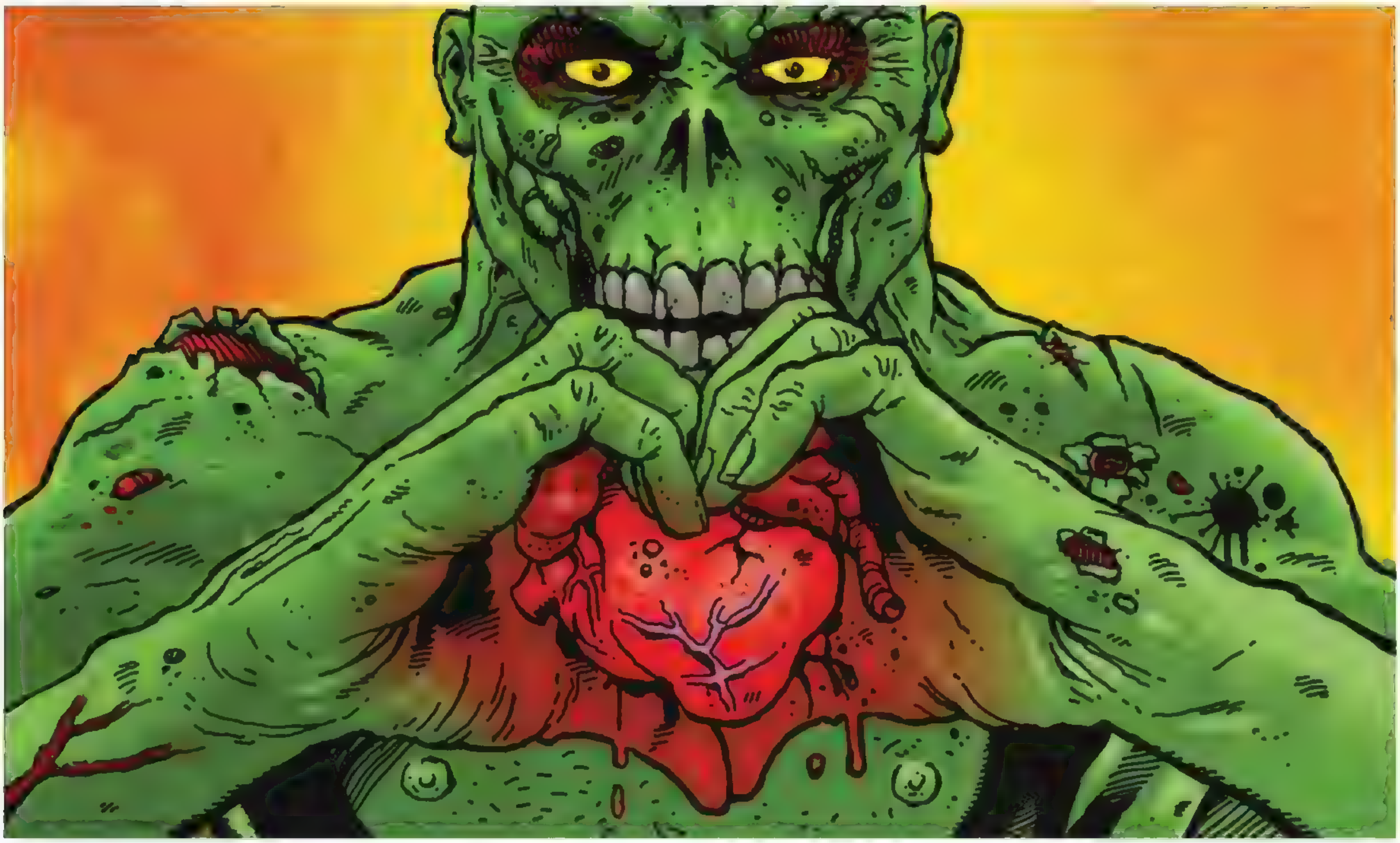
novels that hark back to the comic, and vice versa."

Kirkman is also intent on expanding his Image imprint Skybound, penning children's title *Super Dinosaur* for artist Jason Howard every month and supervising the interchanging teams on *Thief Of Thieves*. Illustrated by Shawn Martinbrough, the opening arc was scripted by *Morning Glories'* Nick Spencer, who then gave way to James Asmus (*Gambit*) with #8, while Andy Diggle will helm the third arc. "To a certain extent, I'm acting like a TV showrunner, mapping out the overall story and working with the different writers," he explains. "They either work with plots that I've come up with or plots that we've developed in our writers' room. It's a fun process and it allows the writers to bring their own talents and life experiences to the table. That then mixes into a big soup of ideas and it ends up becoming a much better story."

With Charles Eglee (*The Shield*, *Powers*) at the helm, *Thief Of Thieves* could soon be joining *The Walking Dead* on the small screen after being optioned by AMC. "Right now it's in pilot development," confirms Kirkman. "Charles is hard at work, writing a script as we speak. We'll present that soon and see if AMC wants to film it as a pilot or commission a full series. We've still got a few steps to go – but it's all looking good."

Below: The shambling undead: Adlard has honed his art as the series has progressed





THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

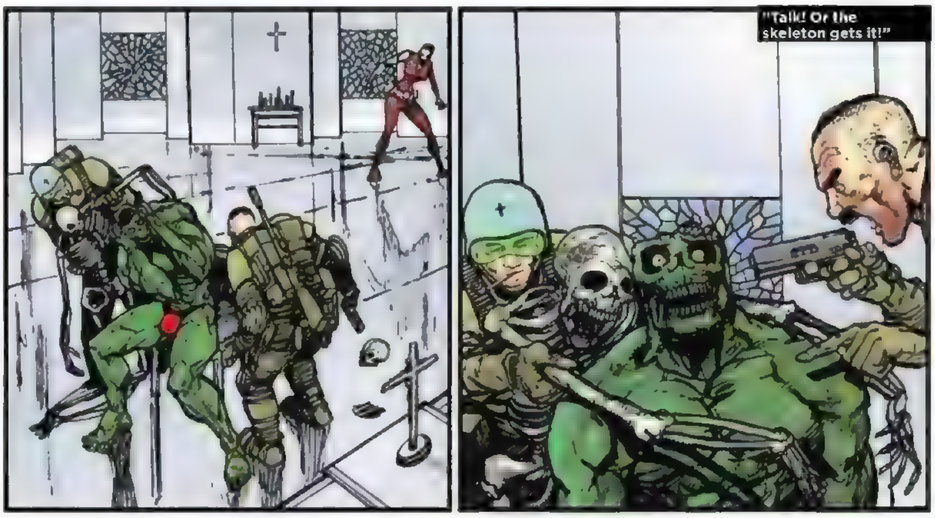
Among the more unexpected hit *2000 AD* series of recent years is *Zombo*, the tale of a deadly (but delightfully deferential) semi-zombie in a space opera future. **By Brian Fields**

The last thing you'd expect when confronted by a monstrous zombie with a taste for human flesh is for it to ask, rather politely, "Can I eat you, please?" But then *Zombo* – the latest hit monster strip from *2000 AD*, where they're all about conjuring up violent but broadly sympathetic protagonist 'villains' – is a story that often delivers what you'd least expect.

The rotting-brainchild of writer Al Ewing and artist Henry Flint, *Zombo* is probably the most original take on the zombie genre since Romero started mixing his first pints of fake blood – he's a half-human/half-zombie secret weapon with a back-up personality (that of a male stripper called Eric) stored in his backside. As monsters go, he's one of the most bizarre the comics have ever delivered – and one of the funniest.

Created as a secret government weapon to battle sentient ecologies – 'Death Planets' of the Outer Systems, which are fighting humanity's expansion with zombie plagues – and bonded with what co-creator Al Ewing refers to as 'a carnivorous Green Lantern beam', Zombo is accidentally released when Flight 303, en route to Epsilon-6 orbital station, crash lands on the lethal deathworld of Chronos. Trapped on a living planet that wants to kill them, the passengers' only hope is Zombo, the 'gentleman zombie'.

From viscerally verdant planets of oblivion to the 'Stars in the Stars' competition ('the only talent contest in deep space'), *Zombo* defies categorisation with beat gags, mass killings, a hint of Aubrey Beardsley and a lurid palette of blood reds and bile yellows. Lauded for its unexpected twists, it's so far proved to be one of those happy mixes of story and art where Flint and Ewing almost seem intent on outdoing each other.

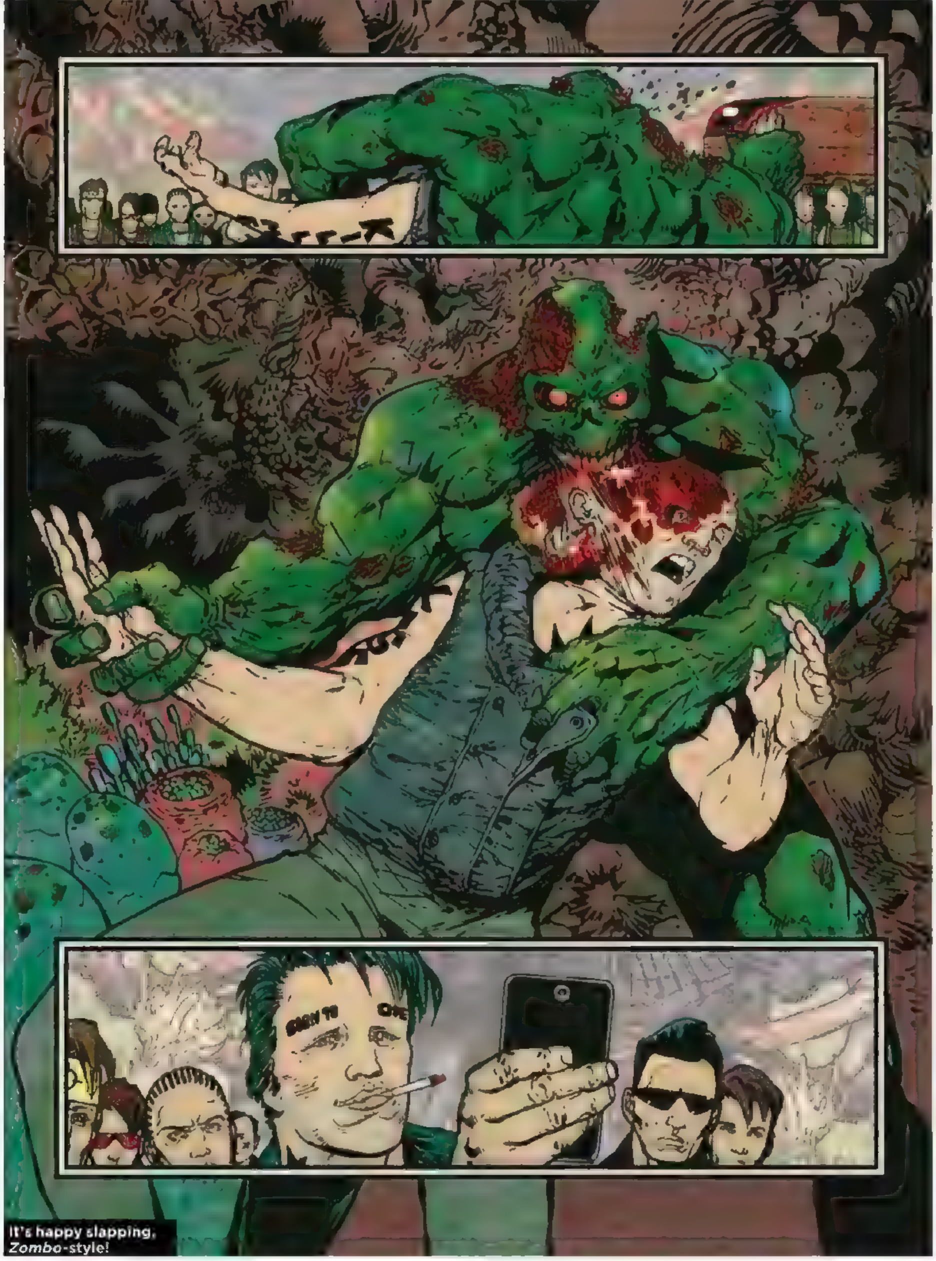

"Talk! Or the skeleton gets it!"

All images © Rebellion 2012 A/S

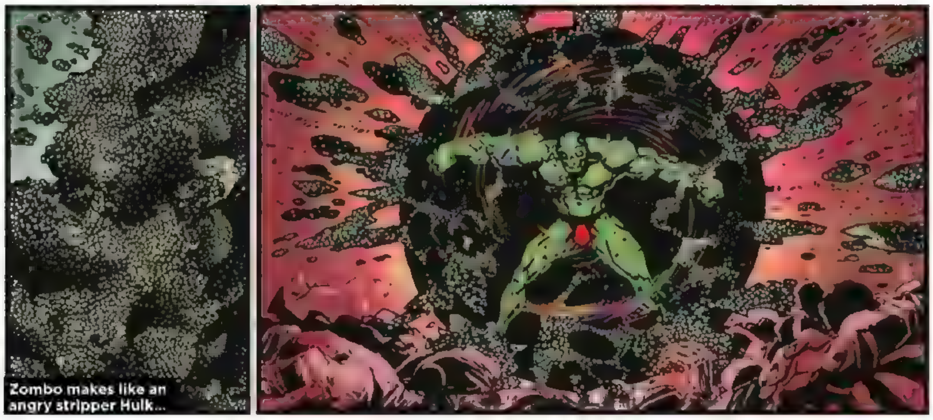
NEW VENTURE

But where did it all come from? Inspired, in part, by madcap animated series *The Venture Bros*, Ewing began *Zombo*'s first story with a Russell Brand-u-like being crushed by a crooning carnivorous plant, while the second opens with the 'Suicide Boys', whose existence is totally devoted to getting five stars on 'space YouTube' by filming themselves dying. Needless to say, each series has been dramatically different to the last.

"For the past couple of seasons it's developed into a character comedy with a rotating cast," Ewing says. "Every so often somebody dies; in fact, pretty much once I've run out of jokes for someone, I start plotting their death. There are a few regulars we can count on to probably survive, but ultimately



It's happy slapping, *Zombo*-style!



Zombo makes like an angry stripper Hulk...

2000 AD
CAN I EAT YOU?
2000 AD
PROG 1634

ZOMBO UNLEASHED!

The story so far...

Zombo

2000 AD Progs 1632 to 1639

Plot: When the ship he was being transported on crash-lands on the lethal planet of Chronos, secret government weapon Zombo awakes to save the passengers. Or does he...?

Ewing's best moment: "The Stinging Ringing Tree is a personal favourite – the double page spread, and all those corpses on the river. That's just masterful from Henry."

Zombo's Eleven

2000 AD Progs 1675 to 1684

Plot: After escaping from Chronos, Zombo reaches an orbiting space station, only to find himself famous thanks to the Suicide Boys community – bored teens looking for spectacular ways to die – and a TV talent show that needs new thrills.

Ewing's best moment: "The head of Walt Disney, and the fact the space station is shaped just like it."

The Day the Zombo Died

2000 AD Progs 1740 to 1749

Plot: Zombo is not the only secret government weapon: Obmoz is the undead crime fighter! And when Zombo must switch to his 'back-up personality', Eric, things get tasty...

Ewing's best moment: "So much good stuff – I loved writing Obmoz. Making the electronic ghost of the President speak like a Jack Kirby character. 'Planet of Broken Hearts' is probably my favourite moment."

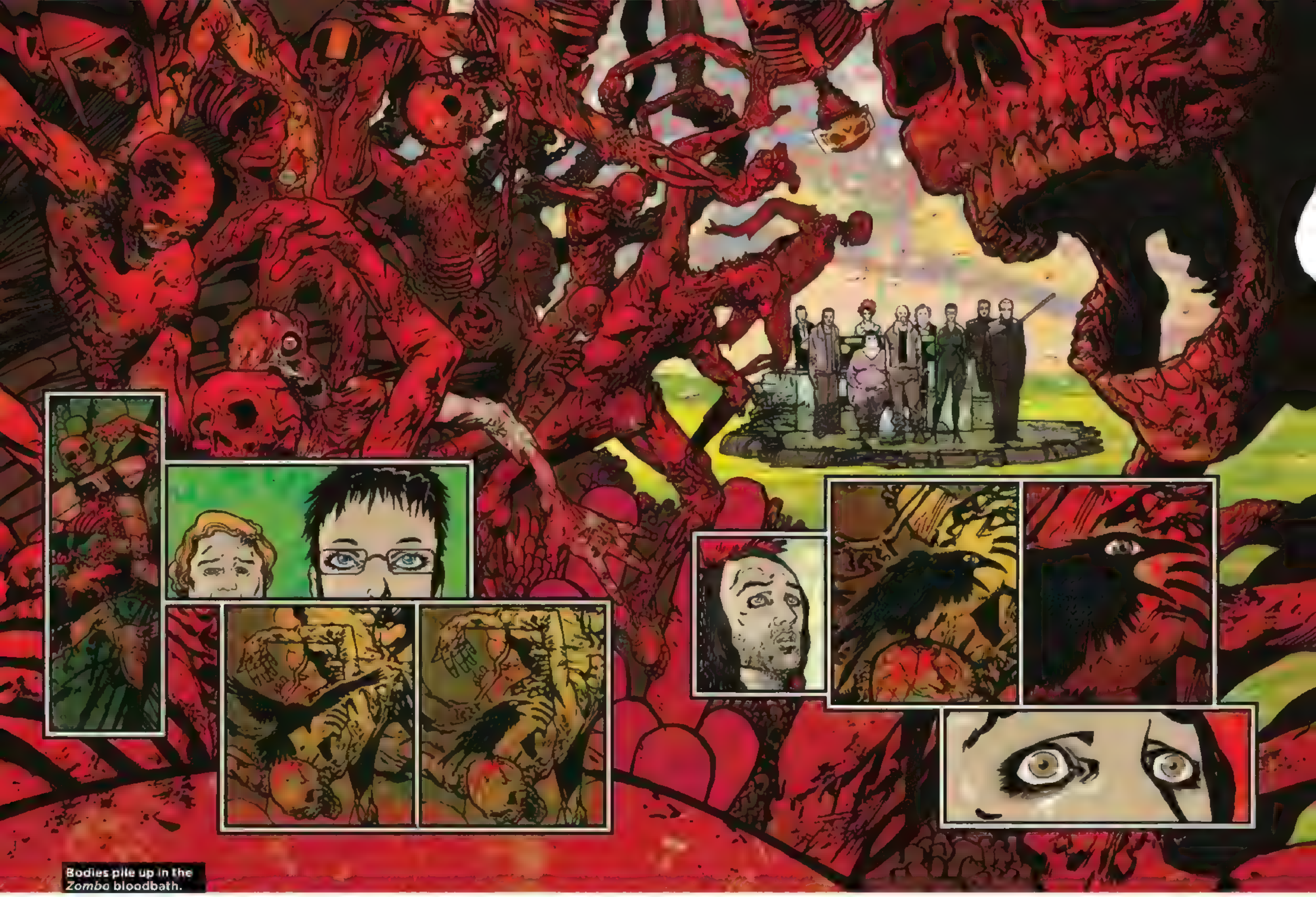
> **" There are a few regulars we can count on to probably survive, but ultimately no one's safe "**

no one's safe. Zombo himself was killed halfway through season three and replaced, for instance, and while I don't think it's a big spoiler to say that he's coming back for season four, we had the equivalent of a whole series of *Zombo* where the lead character doesn't really appear. In fact, his body is taken over by other people for the duration."

Though it's hard to predict exactly which series will find a home in the hearts of the *2000 AD* audience, *Zombo* has proved to be an oddball hit right from the off, confounding expectations with its unique mix of po-faced gags and lashings of pitiless slaughter. Originally a pitch by artist Flint, *2000 AD* editor Matt Smith then paired him with rising star writer Al Ewing in what proved to be a winning combination.

Certainly, both seem to be having almost indecent amounts of fun. Sending up the unintentionally funny pathos of strips such as the early *Swamp Thing*, Ewing has riffed on the portrayal of monsters as either evil fiends or tortured souls. While

»



Bodies pile up in the *Zombo* bloodbath.

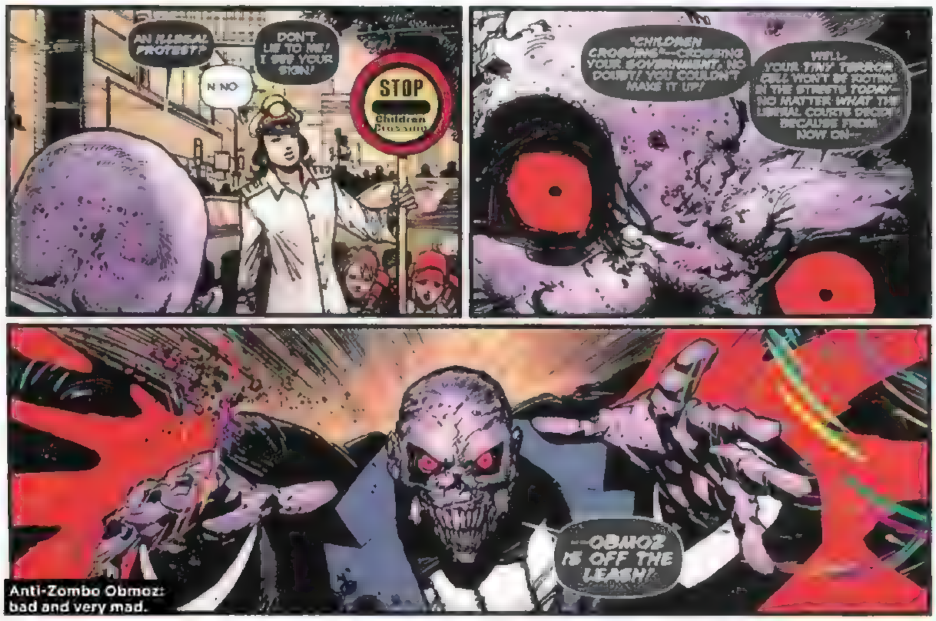
the core character combines genuine creepiness with black humour, his back-up personality – revealed when Zombo has his cranium blown off – is both brilliantly satirical and monstrously funny.

"His back-up personality is really tortured," laughs Ewing. "'I'm a monsterrrrrr!', and all that. In order for that to work it has to be all, 'Once he was a man, now he's less than human' and things like that – so that's where Eric came from. I had so much fun writing him, in many ways I actually prefer him to 'mainstream' Zombo – but I realise the readers like Zombo best, so I had to put Eric away, unfortunately, for the time being. The original will return."

Later, when Zombo's totally monstrous replacement – the dapper, psychotically uncontrollable crime fighter Obmoz – appears, the humour ramps up even further. Ewing manages to make the macabre elements of the strip even darker here, by contrasting them with all-out humour.

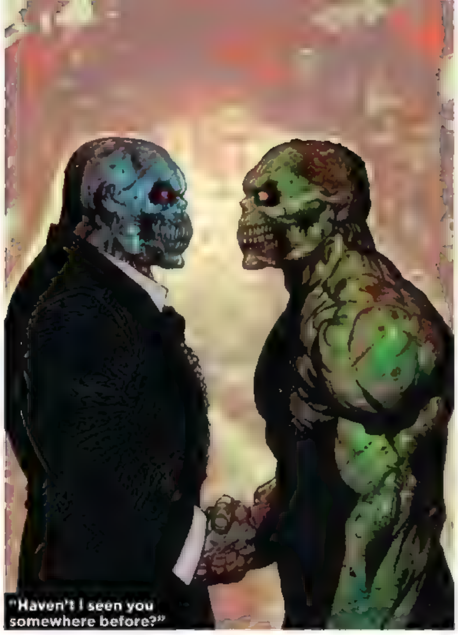
"Even from the start, *Zombo* had elements of humour and that got more and more overt," says Ewing. "But I feel like Matt's comfortable with it, and the readers are comfortable with it, for the most part; certainly, it's my sense of humour, and I think it's Henry's as well. We're just having fun, and it's nice to have the

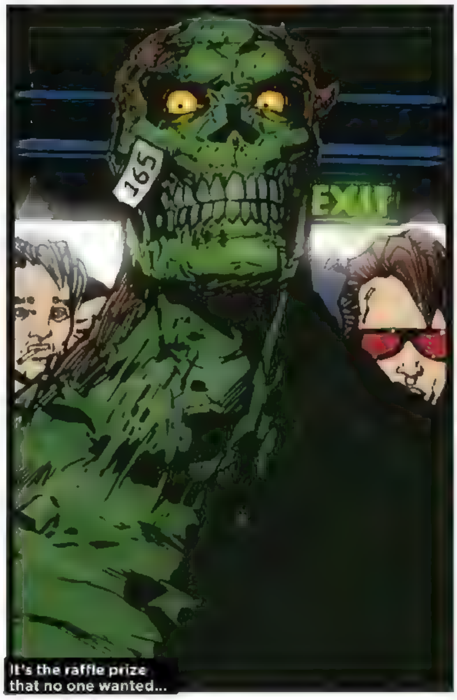
> **“ Even when I'm being serious, I still feel the need to drop the odd gag in there ”**


AN ILLEGAL PROTEST?
N-NO
DON'T LIE TO ME! I SEE YOUR SIGN!
STOP
Children Crossing
"CHILDREN CROSSING"—CROSSING YOUR GOVERNMENT, NO DOUBT! YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP!
WELL, YOUR TINY TERROR CELL WON'T BE RIOTING IN THE STREETS TODAY— NO MATTER WHAT THE LIBERAL COURTS DECIDE BECAUSE FROM NOW ON—
—OBMOZ IS OFF THE LEASH!

Anti-Zombo Obmoz: bad and very mad.

The monster screams; we feel his pain.


"Haven't I seen you somewhere before?"



It's the raffle prize that no one wanted...

opportunity to do humour like this, because it seems quite rare that you'll find overt comedy in comics at the moment."

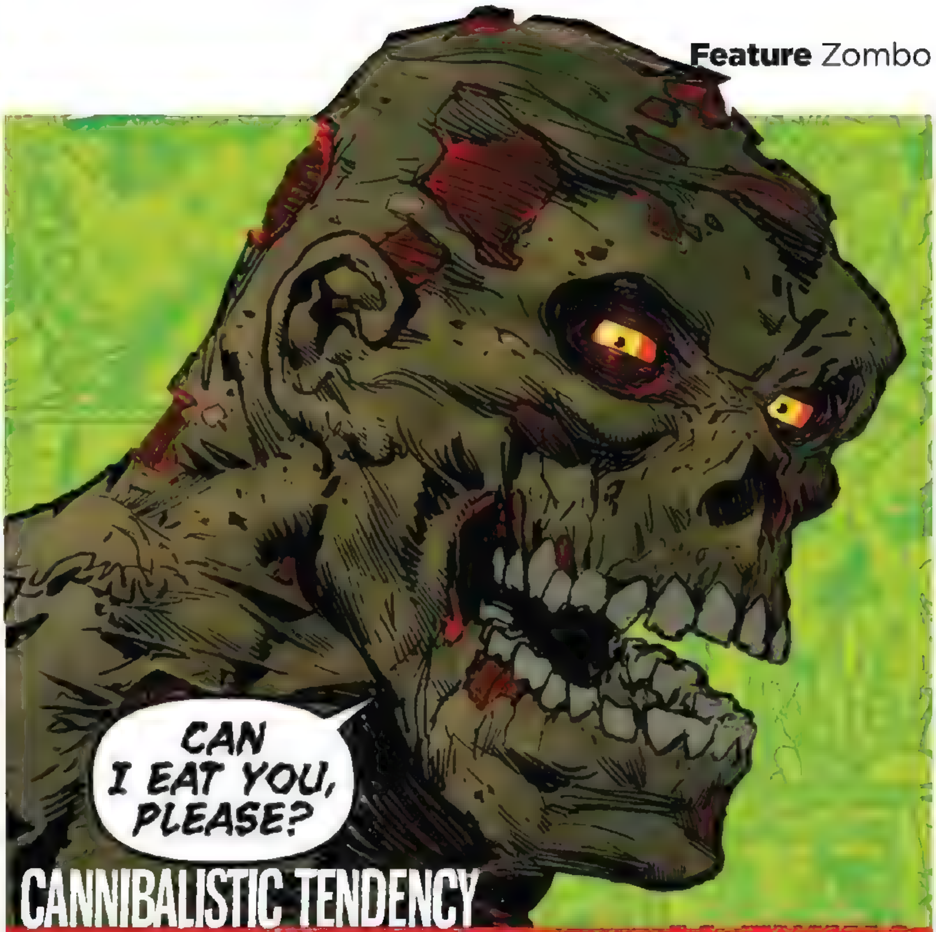
GAGS AND GORE

Unlike earlier *2000 AD* monster strips – like the mighty *Shako*, say – *Zombo* has become a funny story with occasional creepy bits, rather than the other way around. Oh sure, the beginning of series four goes very creepy, but there's never an episode without at least a couple of big laughs.

"Even when I'm being serious – doing a very dark *Judge Dredd*, or even *Damnation Station*, which is the most po-faced thing I've ever written – I still feel the need to drop the odd gag in there," Ewing says, "because it's like taking a breath. That's why I think *Spider-Man* started as such a big success, because of that element.

"Personally, I think comics have lost something in recent times, because so many of them have been so deadly, deadly serious. If there's no humour, then it's like a horror film where you're constantly being scared to death – after a while it gets dull. What makes it work is that moment of contrast." **CH**

***Zombo** returns to **2000 AD** in the new year.*


CAN I EAT YOU, PLEASE?

CANNIBALISTIC TENDENCY

Henry Flint, *2000 AD* legend of recent years – *Rogue Trooper, Nemesis The Warlock, ABC Warriors, Shakara* – was the original sick, diseased mind behind *Zombo*...

Comic Heroes: Let's talk about the design of Zombo himself. Did it change over time?
Henry Flint: I didn't actually do any design work – in fact, the very first drawing of Zombo became the cover for the first graphic novel. [illegible]

CH: Zombies have been reaching media saturation point over the past couple of years. Did that ever worry you? Or isn't this *actually* a zombie story at all?
HF: [illegible]

CH: How has your working relationship changed over the series?
HF: [illegible]

CH: So has *Zombo* gone the way you thought it would?
HF: No. Al's taken it in a completely different direction. [illegible]

CH: Looking ahead to series four, are you hoping to top the lunacy of the last series?
HF: Yes! [illegible] It's all looking good.

CH: Is *Zombo*, on some level, an act of rebellion? Perhaps against earnest comics? Bland mainstream media? Male strippers...?
HF: [illegible]

CH: What's been your favourite moment so far, and what are you looking forward to most with series four?
HF: [illegible]

JUDGE JAMES'S COMICS COURTROOM

CRIMINALLY CRAFTY COMICS
BLOOP
My Brother's A Chimp

Superhero monsters are a win-win, surely? Not if they're Dell Comics superhero monsters. **Judge James Lovegrove** presides...

PROSECUTION: Sad to say, we have a persistent repeat offender in the dock today, m'lud. You may recall that, not long ago, you tried Dell Comics for the publication of *Neutro*, the alleged 'worst comic of all time'. Now Dell are up before you again, this time on charges of purveying a trio of abysmally poor superhero titles whose central characters are based – very loosely indeed – on three icons of pop culture horror: Count Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster and the Werewolf.

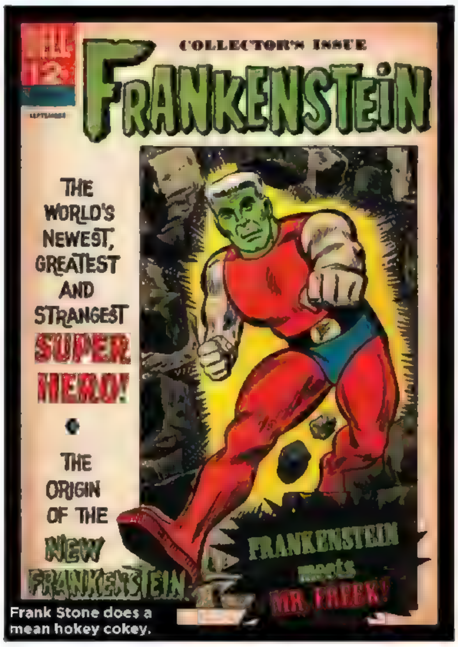
DEFENCE: In itself, not a bad idea, surely. First appearing in the mid-'60s, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Werewolf* were clearly intended as light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek superhero fodder very much in the mould of mighty Marvel, then in its nascent Silver Age pomp. The monsters were reimagined as, respectively, a spandex-clad adventurer able to turn himself into a bat, an ultra-smart strongman, and a cunning CIA spy equipped with super-sophisticated skintight costume and gadget-laden utility belt, and aided in his endeavours by an intelligent wolf.

PROSECUTION: Where to begin with the absurdity of these depictions? Dracula is a modern-day descendant of the infamous vampire lord, a scientist who creates a serum derived from 'the supersensory portions of the brains of bats' with the goal of curing brain damage. Toasting his own success, he accidentally drinks the serum – suggesting that, for a brilliant biochemist, he is also a complete moron. Somehow his potion grants him the ability to assume the form of a bat – hardly the pioneering medical breakthrough he was aiming for – and using this newfound power he foils a Communist plot to trigger all-out nuclear war. He subsequently develops his physique, in a two-page training montage, and dons a purple-and-red costume which is seemingly intended to resemble Batman's, but in fact makes him look like a gay cat.

DEFENCE: Nonetheless, he becomes a dauntless foe of evil, defeating the likes of Admiral Maltemps, who plans to destroy America using 'uncontrolled weather... weather gone mad!', and the Evil Piper, who hypnotises children by playing his flute and turning them into a pint-size army to do his every bidding. Dracula also picks up a girl sidekick, Fleeta, and rumbles a phoney spiritualist who is fleecing gullible old ladies. No one could deny that he, or his civilian alter ego Al U Card, packs a lot into the three issues his title lasted!

PROSECUTION: Three issues. That says it all. *Frankenstein* and *Werewolf* also notched up a mere three issues of new material before cancellation, and the former really is as dumb a comic as has ever been produced. Our manmade hero is roused from a century-long slumber by a bolt of lightning. He comes to with no memory of who he is, and no clue as to his identity other than a chunk of stone with the partial word 'Frank' on it. He assumes the alias Frank Stone, naturally, and travels to nearby Metropole City. On the way he saves a rich old man, Mr Knickerbocker, from a near-fatal car crash. Knickerbocker dies a few pages later, conveniently bequeathing his estate, including butler William, to Frank. Soon enough, Frank is combating crime, dressed in a fetching sleeveless scarlet tunic and matching tights.

DEFENCE: The comic cleaved to a classic superhero template: the wealthy-playboy secret identity, the prissy butler, the need for the hero to preserve his civilian guise from


DELL 12¢
COLLECTOR'S ISSUE
FRANKENSTEIN
THE WORLD'S NEWEST, GREATEST AND STRANGEST SUPER HERO!
THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW FRANKENSTEIN
FRANKENSTEIN meets MR. FREEK!

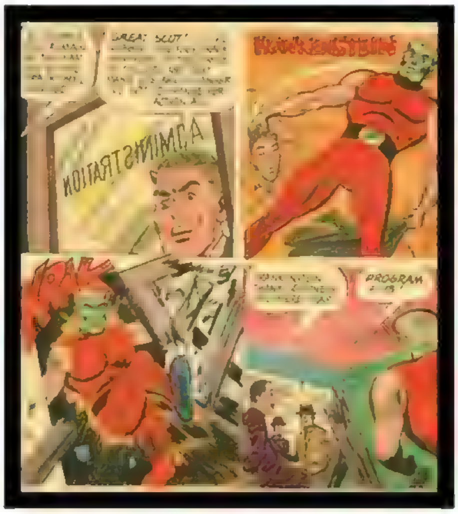
Frank Stone does a mean hokey cokey.

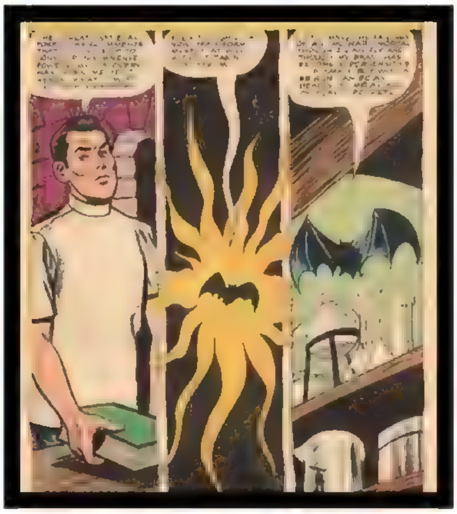
DELL 15¢
DRACULA
DRACULA COMES TO AMERICA!
THE PLOT BEHIND THE DEATH DEALING WEATHER SHIPS!
FLOODS... HURRICANES... BLIZZARDS... TORRENTIAL RAINS... CAN DRACULA STOP

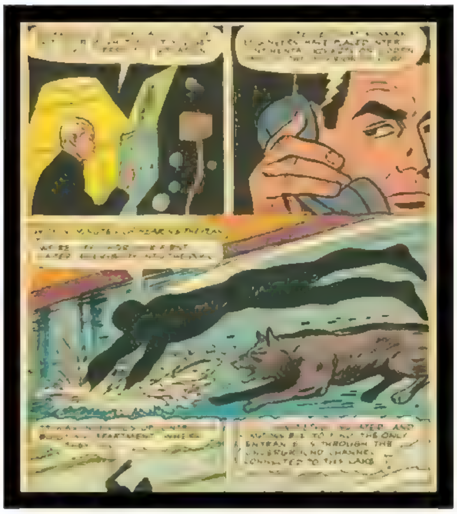
It's a worry: weather ships go BAD!

DELL 12¢
WEREWOLF
WHERE DID HE COME FROM?
THE ONLY SUPER HERO... SUPER SPY IN THE WORLD
WHAT IS HIS REAL
THE ORIGIN OF WEREWOLF

Major Wiley Wolf and his canine sidekick.


GREAT SCOT!
FRANKENSTEIN
ADMINISTRATION
PROGRAM





> **“I would suggest that the best way to enjoy them is using no senses at all – especially sight”**

prying busybodies, which in this case means blonde love interest Ann. One might accuse Dell of playing safe, but equally one could argue that there's nothing wrong with seeing what works for other publishers and offering readers more of the same. And, if nothing else, Frankenstein's 'look' is highly distinctive.

PROSECUTION: You mean in as much as he resembles a bodybuilder sporting a pale green Boris Karloff monster head mask? 'Distinctive' is certainly one word for it. 'Dismal' is another. The same applies to the scripting, which scales *Ed Wood* heights of banality and nonsensicality. 'These books... this mask... this stone,' says Frankenstein, pondering his mysterious origins. 'They are all I have to tell me who I am. The doctor spoke of a strange society of the future... Can it be that I have awakened in that society? I must find out... But I must not betray my real identity. The doctor warned me and the book also says the same thing.'

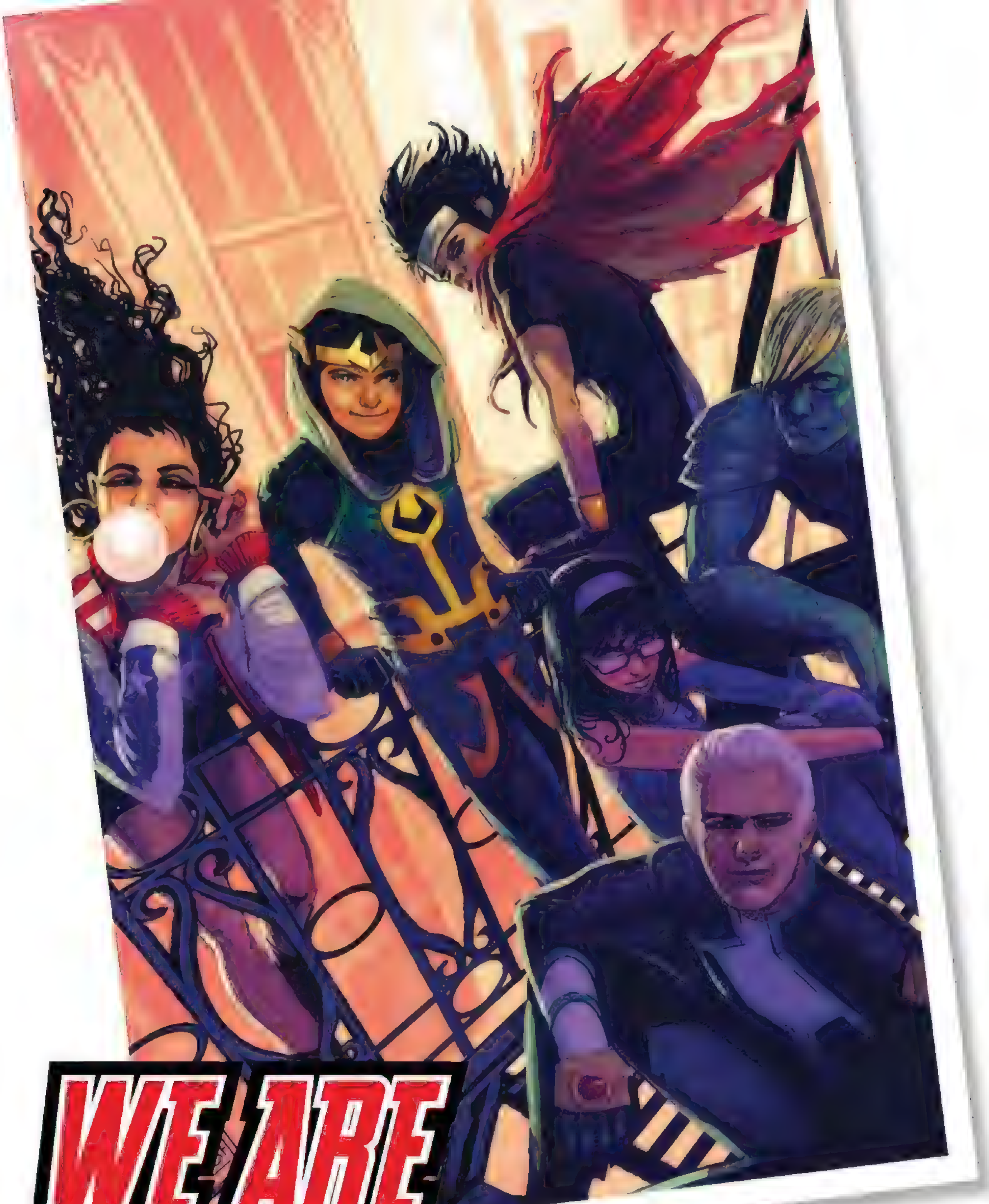
DEFENCE: I fear my learned friend has fallen into the trap of taking the comics far too seriously. Consider the often punsome character names. Frankenstein's arch-enemy Mr Freek. Ditzy singleton Ann Thrope – 'Miss Ann Thrope', get it? A man who, deafened by urban noise, wants to impose peace and quiet on the world: Cy Lantz. Red Chinese baddie Sing Lo. Not to mention Werewolf himself, who when not using his spy codename answers to the name of Wiley Wolf. Werewolf, by the way, has the capacity to disguise his features simply by altering the muscles of his face. He also communicates with his wolf, Thor, via a transmitter implanted in his larynx. A sense of humour, clearly, is essential to enjoyment of these series.

PROSECUTION: I would suggest that the best way to enjoy them is by using no senses at all – especially sight. The artwork is universally atrocious. The culprits remain uncredited in the comics themselves, probably to protect them from reprisals by art lovers, but we now know them to be the notorious penciller/inker team of Bill Fraccio and Tony Tallarico. As for the scripts, those are believed to be the responsibility of a certain Don Segall.

DEFENCE: Perhaps, m'lud, in mitigation you could take into account the fact that neither *Dracula*, nor *Frankenstein*, nor *Werewolf*, lasted long enough to do any significant damage to the good name of comics. The offence, if we may call it that, was short-lived and petty. Far worse crimes have been committed, over far greater spans on time.

IN THE DOCK NEXT TIME:

When is a parody comic not a parody comic? When it's the stunningly unfunny mess that is ***Marville****.*



WE ARE YOUNG

The *Phonogram* co-creators, Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie, have reunited to relaunch *Young Avengers* for Marvel Now!

By Stephen Jewell

NOW WE SEE YOU.

When *Comic Heroes* meets Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie at a tapas bar just off Charing Cross Road, it's hard not to think that we should have headed to the nearest Korean barbecue joint instead.

"Whenever we go over for New York Comic Con, we always stay in the middle of Koreatown," says Gillen, referring to the Midtown Manhattan neighbourhood several blocks west of the Javits Center. "So our editors are always dragging us to Korean restaurants for editorial meetings."

And like a mouth-watering starter, the eight-page teaser strip from the recent *Marvel Now!: Point One* anthology features the fearsome Miss America battling an ever-mischievous Kid Loki over more than just who scoffed all the pork belly, whetting the appetite for the main course: next month's *Young Avengers* #1, which finds the *Phonogram* co-creators collaborating for the first time on an ongoing Marvel monthly.

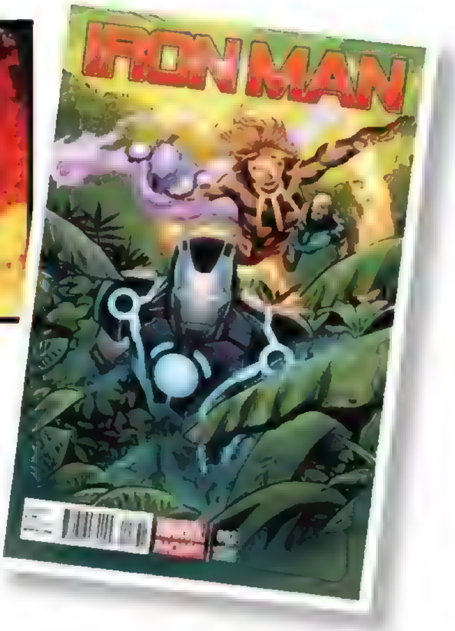
Having wrapped up his stints on *Uncanny X-Men* and *Journey In Mystery* after Marvel Now!'s creative reshuffle, Gillen was offered the reins of the junior version of Earth's Mightiest Heroes along with *Iron Man* by editor-in-chief Axel Alonso. But while he was eager to take on the challenge of chronicling the eventful life of Tony Stark from Matt Fraction, he was initially reluctant to relaunch on *Young Avengers*, which has only previously been helmed by its creators, Allan Heinberg and Jimmy Cheung.

"The one thing I haven't done for Marvel is build a book from the ground up," he reasons. "The closest I've ever got is *Journey In Mystery* – but even that was a book that owed its existence to a tie-in to a Marvel crossover."

Gillen was eventually persuaded to accept the assignment on the condition that he could work not only with his long-time foil, but also *Phonogram* colourist Matt Wilson, and Mike Norton, who assisted McKelvie on his *X-Men: Season One* graphic novel.

"There's a sense of a clean start," says McKelvie, who's taking on his first Marvel monthly after his spell on Matt Fraction's *The Defenders* was terminated early. "It's like our creative team – our gang – is coming onto the book all at once. You have to be mindful of the history but we're certainly doing our own thing."

"We're not timid!" declares Gillen. "This is a very aggressive reimagination of what *Young Avengers* could be. We're staying true to the heart of it and we're keeping some of the characters, because they're a great-looking bunch. It's essentially all about their youthfulness, especially now the Avengers are basically like a government agency – kind of like the police. I'm very much against the over-militarisation of superheroes because it makes them 'the man'. I did that in *Uncanny X-Men* when I pretty much turned Cyclops into a terrorist – maybe an agreeable terrorist, but still a terrorist. The whole Utopia sequence with the Avengers was basically Waco in the Marvel U. There's a bit of that in this as well, but while *Uncanny X-Men* was quite cynical, I wanted this to be optimistic – a fundamental characteristic of *Young Avengers*."



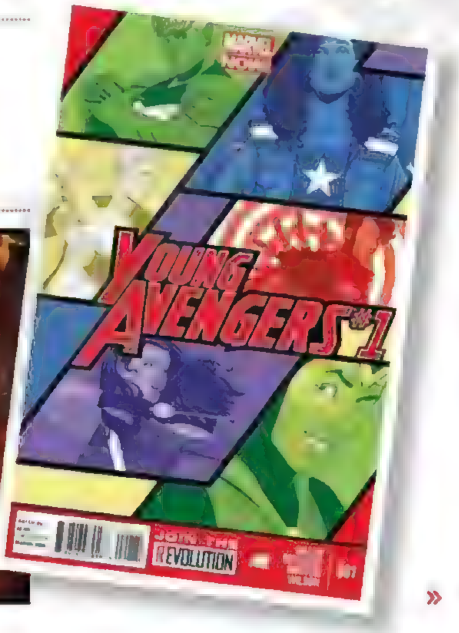
Above & below: As well as writing *Young Avengers*, Gillen's also busy penning Marvel Now!'s *Iron Man* reboot

IN TUNE

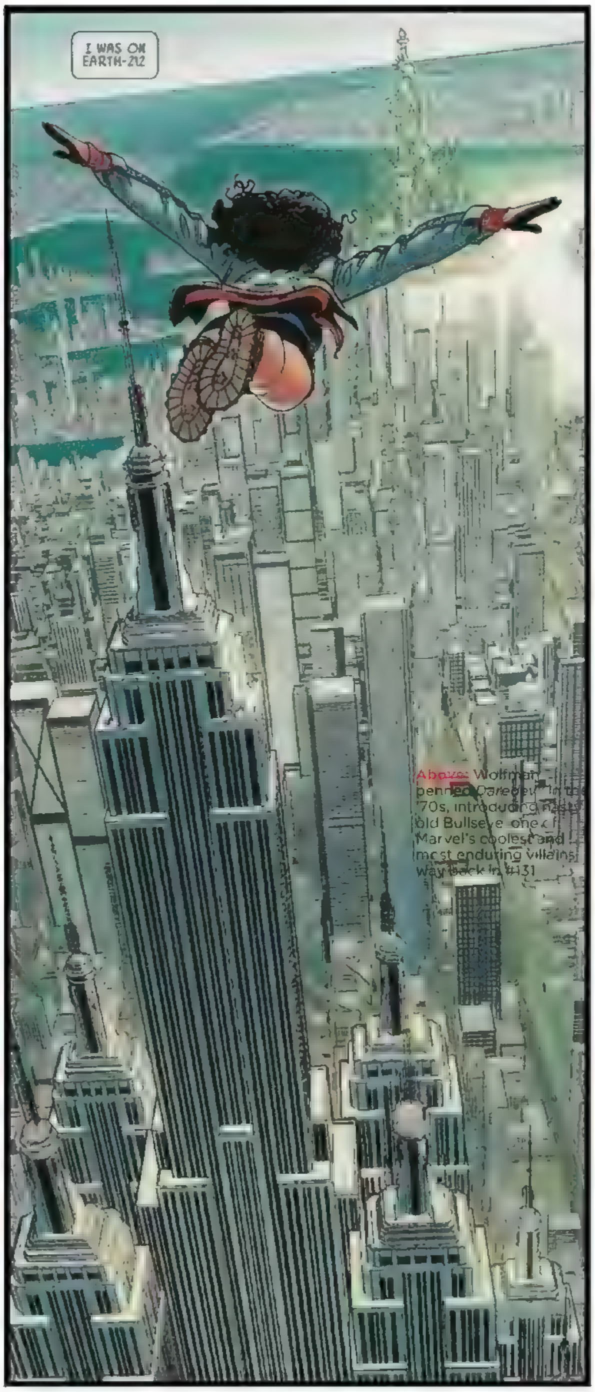
While Gillen has previously incorporated elements of *Phonogram* into his Marvel work, *Young Avengers* is the closest he has come to replicating the themes and working methods of his breakthrough Image series. "Even if I wasn't doing it with Jamie, the way of approaching it was to essentially use the *Phonogram* toolset in the Marvel U," he explains. "I'm writing it like a pop song. I knew the vibe of *Young Avengers* before I knew the story. It's basically superhero fight scenes as clubbing."

McKelvie insists that the only difference between the nature of their collaboration on *Young Avengers* and *Phonogram* is that there's an editor involved. "In terms of how we work day-to-day, it's exactly the same," he says. As for Gillen, he reveals that he has now brought some of his more esoteric practices to his superhero stories. "There are certain ways I have

> **"Imagine what it's like forming a band without any knowledge of your mighty forebears"**



»

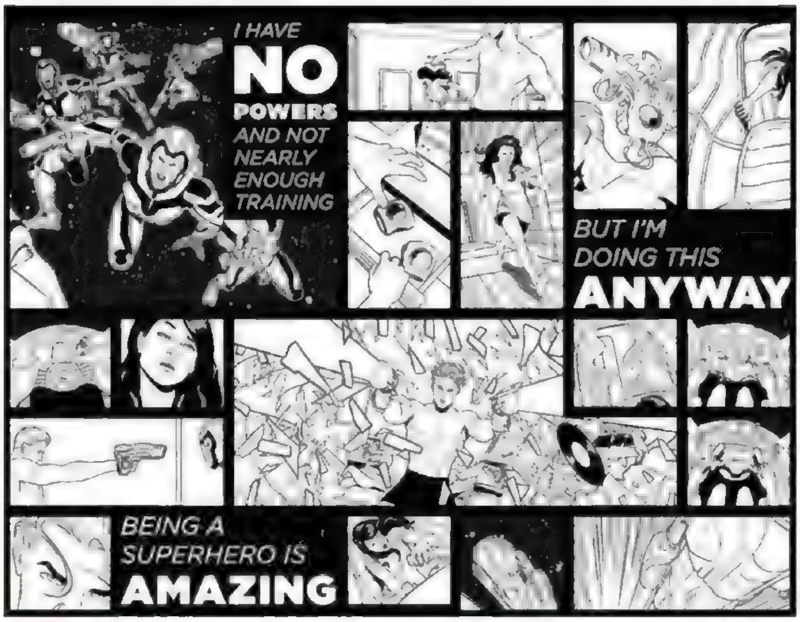

I WAS ON EARTH-212
Above: Wolfman-penned Daredevil in the '70s, introducing nasty old Bullseye one of Marvel's coolest and most enduring villains way back in #131

Above: New girl America Chavez is the Young Avenger's Queen of Mean.

of writing a script – like these weird hieroglyphs that I use – that I've never used on a Marvel book until now because the editors would think I'm insane," he says. "But I've worked with Jamie for a long time and I trust him."

Initially wary of the characters' close familial links to their senior Avenging counterparts, Gillen stresses that *Young Avengers* is set in the here and now and isn't mired in decades of extraneous continuity. "We were talking about the Manics this morning and how they're always being slagged off for being shit Clash copyists," he says. "But if you're 14 and you've never heard The Clash then they sound amazing. *Young Avengers* is a bit like that. Imagine what it's like forming a band without any knowledge of your mighty forebears?"

While Heinberg and Cheung's line-up were all about 16, returning members Wiccan, Hulking and Kate Bishop have, crucially, aged two years by the time Gillen and McKelvie pick up the plot. "In *Phonogram*, we used the idea of music being like magic – an urban fantasy conceit to talk about how music affects human beings," says Gillen. "In this, we're using the idea of superhero adventures to explore the concept of what it's like to be 18. I recently went to see [Swedish singer] Robyn, who's a 30-something woman writing about teenage emotions for an audience that's between the two. It's like she's old enough to know better but she's writing about these emotional moments with an incredible clarity and as much power as she can bring."


I HAVE NO POWERS AND NOT NEARLY ENOUGH TRAINING
BUT I'M DOING THIS ANYWAY
BEING A SUPERHERO IS AMAZING

> **“We're using superheroes to explore the concept of what it's like to be 18”**

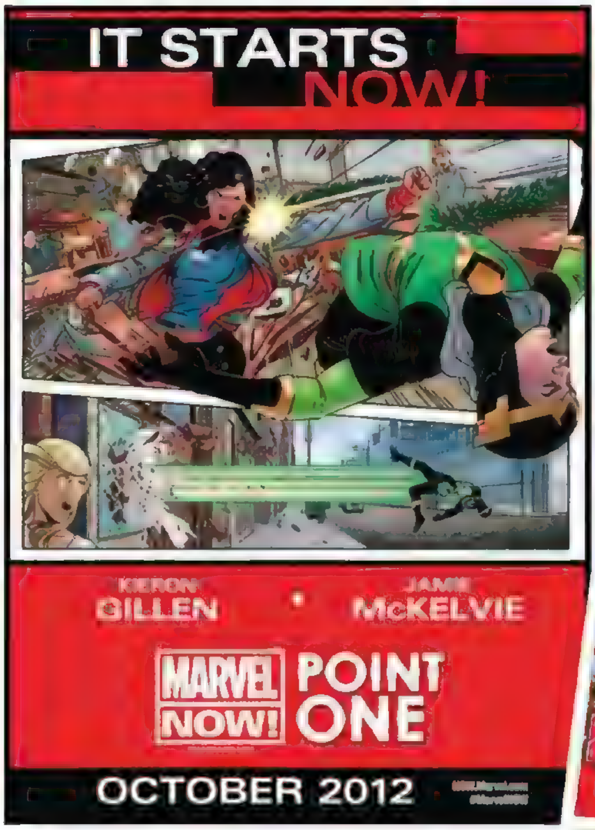
According to Gillen, Wiccan – the unlikely offspring of the Scarlet Witch and Vision – was the pivotal founding figure in the inaugural *Young Avengers*. "He was arguably the lead, so that meant that if I was going to keep any of the original team, I had to keep him," he says. "He was so put upon dramatically, which meant that he had to be in control. In a way, my first arc is about Wiccan messing up. He has this lovely house in New York and a beautiful boyfriend: he's a bit self-centred while Hulkling is a bit self-sacrificing, which is a relationship I recognise. They're like the perfect dream couple, so I'd be foolish and mad to split them up immediately."

FAMILY TREE

While Patriot was unavailable, Gillen and McKelvie are sharing erstwhile Hawkeye Kate Bishop with Matt Fraction and David Aja's bravura *Hawkeye*. "I was thinking about the idea of legacy and the fact that these characters are basically analogues of established Marvel characters," explains Gillen, who introduced the headstrong America Chavez, aka Miss America, from Joe Casey and Nick Dragotta's 2011 *Vengeance* miniseries as a contrast to Kate Bishop's more rarified roots.

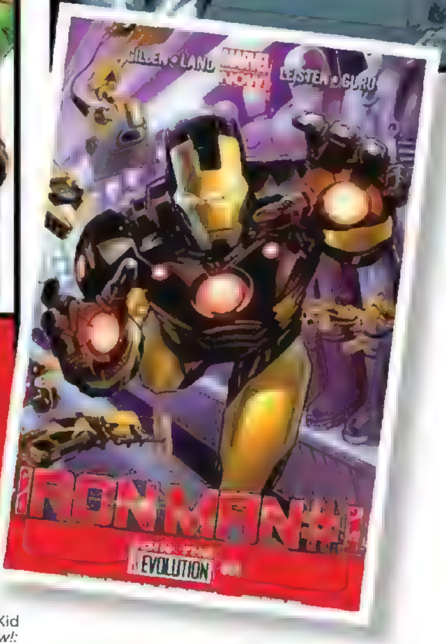
"She's this enormously entertaining kick-ass girl!" he laughs. "Most of the Young Avengers are nice middle class kids, but she's not. She's really horrible and much more like the kind of character I tend to write. She comes from a much less privileged background than the others, especially Kate. She's got a Batman-like background. In the real world, Kate

GEE I DON'T KNOW. IT'S SO HARD TO CONCENTRATE.
MAYBE ONE OF THOSE ENERGY DRINK COCKTAILS WOULD HELP. THEY'RE SO TASTY AND THEY TWINKLE!



Above: Miss America wipes the table with Kid Loki in the *Marvel Now!: Point One* teaser.

WHICH WILL BE WHATEVER HE WAS GUARDING
WHICH WILL BE EXTREMIS



would be famous but in the Marvel U she's the person on the team who hasn't got a supernatural gift. On some level, they're both jealous of what the other has."

While Wiccan was the key protagonist in the original volume, Loki appears to be the driving force behind Gillen and McKelvie's newborn team. "I was already writing Loki in *Journey In Mystery* so I thought 'why not?'" admits Gillen with a cheeky smile. "I was also thinking about how the stories I want to do are essentially riffs on classic old Avengers stories; Loki puts the Avengers together being the most classic Avengers story of them all, so why not have him put together the Young Avengers. But Wiccan and Hulkling are quite suspicious of him, basically because he's Loki! I like that kind of tension and the manipulating of characters: it makes for a very interesting dynamic."

The opening arc alludes to another popular Avengers storyline. "Until I told them, nobody got that I was basically riffing off the Ultron archetype, where Hank Pym makes an evil invention that goes wrong," he reveals. "In our story, Wiccan makes this enormous mistake, which essentially gathers everyone around him. Instead of date and continuity, a lot of what I'm doing is very roughly based on the high concept of previously existing Marvel comics. There's magic and we talk about family and all that stuff, but that's how we keep the continuity."

Also joining the Young Avengers is Noh-Varr, aka Marvel Boy, who has been integrated into the general Avengers ranks and adopted numerous aliases, including Captain Marvel and Protector, since debuting in Grant Morrison and JG Jones' 2000 limited series. "Without negating anything that Brian Bendis has done, Marvel Boy was originally a really arrogant shit who wanted to kill everybody on this planet because they were stupid," says Gillen. "But what ran through Brian's work is that he essentially learnt to love the Earth, even if it is in a slightly patronising way. He's basically an alien hipster who, if he falls in love, does so in an almost arrogant way."

"Two pages in, you discover that his apartment is his ship," adds McKelvie. "He has classic cinema posters on the walls – not just Hollywood but world cinema, so everything from *Blow Up* to *Spirited Away* and *Metropolis*. He's like a geek of world culture."

"He plays *Be My Baby* by The Ronettes to Kate, in his underpants, and starts talking about how amazing the drum sound is," continues Gillen. "There's a playfulness to him, and a sexuality. He's much more in touch with his inner-James Dean-ness."

But rather than the late *Rebel Without A Cause* actor, it was the Thin White Duke who provided McKelvie's visual inspiration. "He's an alien so I'm evoking a bit of David Bowie from *The Man Who Fell To Earth*," he says, referring to Nic Roeg's seminal 1976 film. "I've also completely redesigned Miss America – all the characters have their own personalities, backgrounds and styles so it's quite important for each to have their own visual identity. I've also redesigned Hulkling but I've kept it quite simple because the whole point is that he's a shape-changer."

McKelvie did, however, remain true to David Aja's depiction of Kate Bishop in *Hawkeye*, while Loki is the proverbial fish out of water. "He's an Asgardian in a costume so he's meant to look a bit ridiculous," laughs Gillen. "He's Cosplay-Boy, as the first panel describes him!"

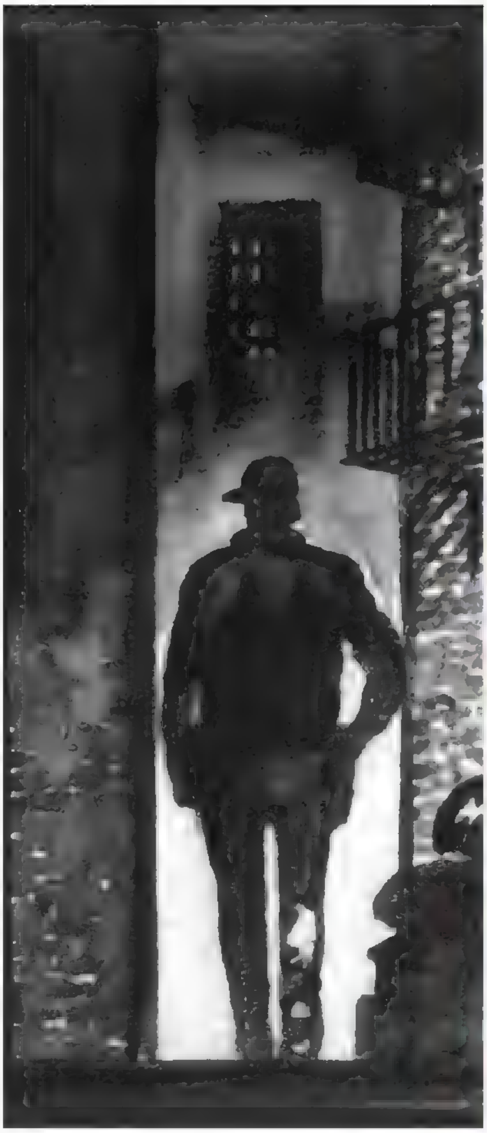
Wiccan's outfit will also stay the same – for now at least. "When the story starts, he's not actually a superhero, which is kind of the point," explains Gillen. "Everyone else has started being a superhero again on the down-low, but no one's told Wiccan, who's like, 'We're not meant to do this, remember what happened last time!'"

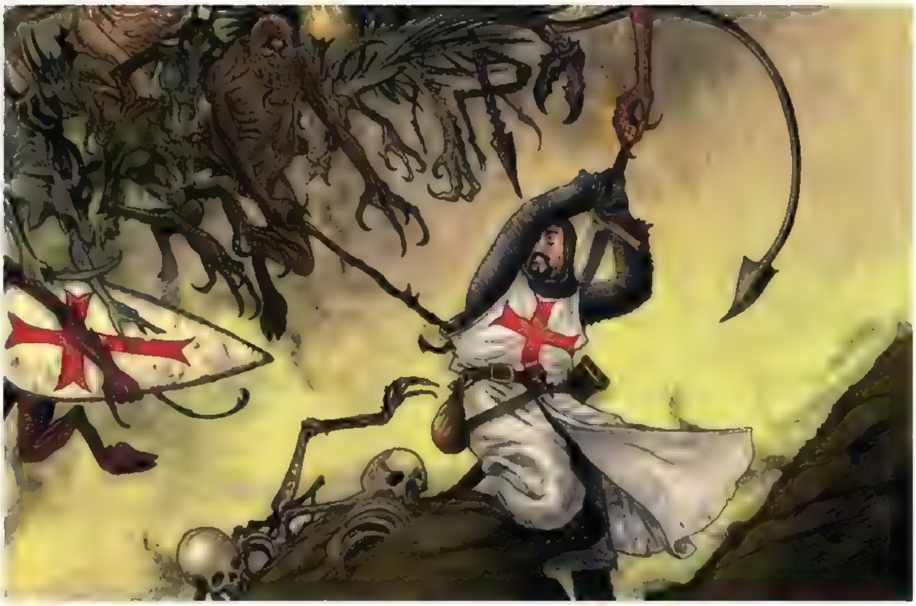
While Gillen has completed scripting the long-awaited *Phonogram 3*, McKelvie will have to fit illustrating *The Immaterial Girl* around his Marvel commitments. "All six issues are written in draft state so if I die it'll happen," he says. "We're meant to do an issue a month of *Young Avengers* but there's a bit more time because Jamie is working with Mike Norton."

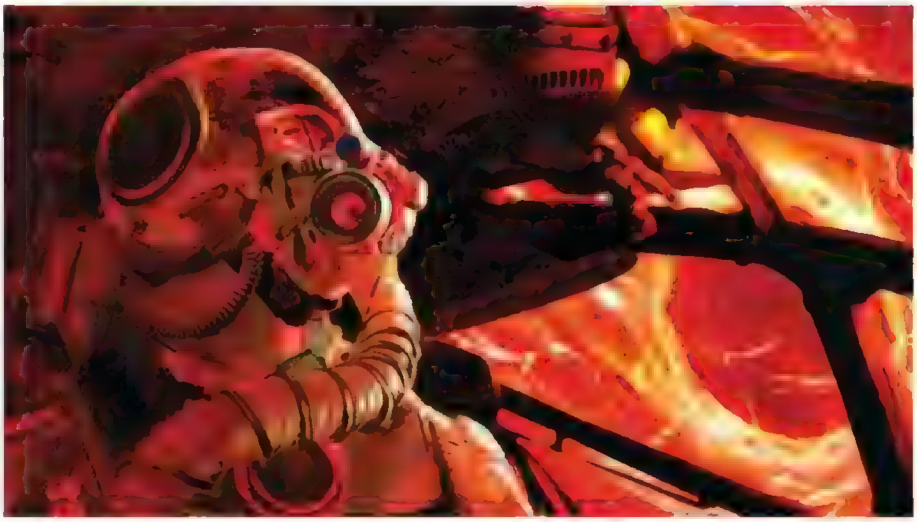
"I work digitally now," adds McKelvie. "I pencil the pages, ink the figures and then send them to Mike. That lets me do other stuff like *Phonogram*, which I'm working on slowly. So we'll get there – it's definitely happening." ■

"HAVE YOU EVER BELIEVED IN SOMETHING?
"I ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE.

***Young Avengers* #1** *kicks off in January.*







ACES HIGH

David Lloyd has bold plans for the new British web-only anthology *Aces Weekly* – and a list of creators to die for... **By Alex Fitch**

David Lloyd is no stranger to British anthology comics, having contributed pencils and inks to such classic titles as *Hulk Comic*, *Warrior* – where he co-created the classic *V For Vendetta*, of course – and *Doctor Who Magazine* in the late '70s/early '80s. But now, alongside '90s Marvel UK editor Bambos Georgiou, he's leapt back into the ring, launching a new weekly anthology title to showcase, in his words, "fantastic comic art on screen, where it can be appreciated, while sales of print in the comics medium are going down".

That's right: it's a web comic, but a supremely ambitious one. Right now there are only three British weekly adventure comics left in print – *2000 AD*, of course; *The Phoenix*, which many have never seen, so few places is it available; and *Commando*, the latter only featuring one story per issue, half of which are reprints. Lloyd hopes *Aces Weekly*, his new digital title, will liven the sector up a bit.

Made up of classically familiar building blocks – five serialised stories each issue, plus a humour strip – but delivered in an unfamiliar format, Lloyd and co's website is updated weekly with new instalments of each strip, but password-protected behind a paywall. Each issue is £1, but subscribers have to pay for a volume of seven issues in advance. This still works out considerably cheaper than any other anthology comic, not least when you take on board that the selection of creators Lloyd has hired is a formidable line-up.

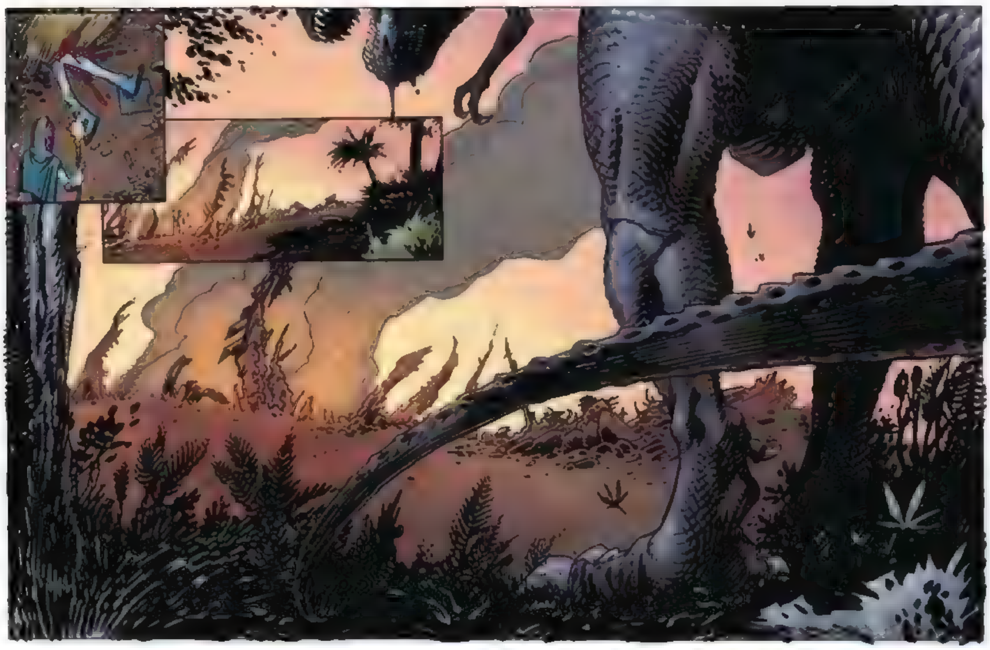
Artists and writers contributing to the first volume include Mark Wheatley, David Hitchcock, Ferg Handley and Lloyd himself, with forthcoming strips by Steve Bissette, Bill Sienkiewicz, Kev Hopgood and Herb Trimpe. The stories are a mix of original work and new instalments for creator-owned characters, such as Bissette's Tyrant; the one-off humour strips, meanwhile, including Lew Stringer's *Combat Colin*, Carl Critchlow's *Thrud The Barbarian* and David Leach's *Psycho Gran*.

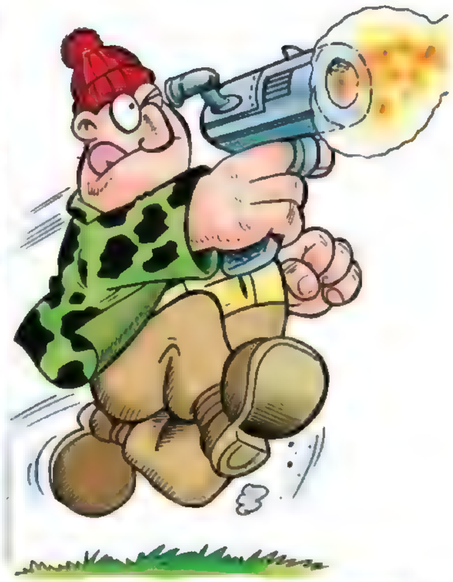
Above: Lloyd has written a strip himself (*Valley Of Shadows*, left), and also recruited the likes of David Hitchcock (*Paradise Mechanism*, top right) and JC Vaughn and Mark Wheatley (*Return Of The Human*, right)

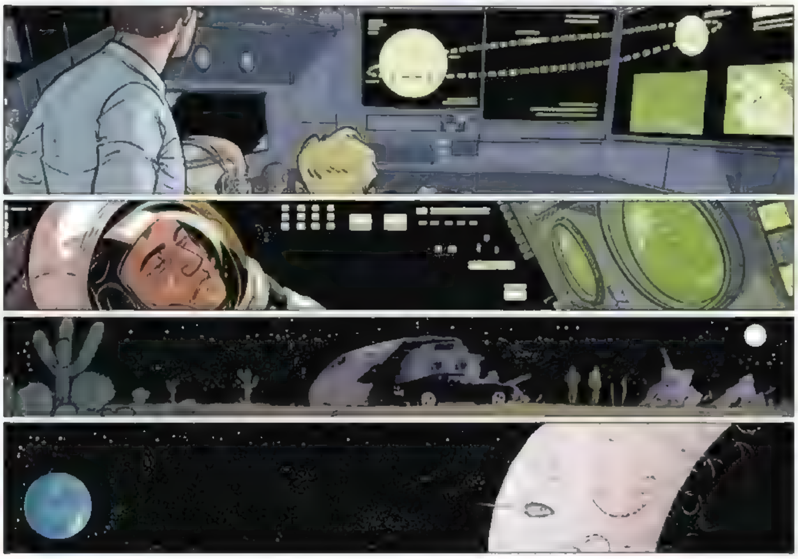
Coming soon to a screen near you...

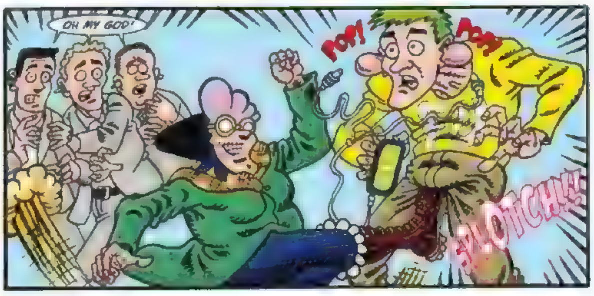
MONSTER MAYHEM

In the first volume, Phil Hester and John McCrea's *Progenitor* features battling aliens and dinosaurs. "You're basically left with a cliffhanger every three pages, just like in old British comics," artist McCrea explains. "Phil's written a rip-roaring adventure, which just barrels along, gives you a cliffhanger each time and tries to get in a little characterisation as well – but not too much, because you don't want to get in the way of the artist, who's getting to draw lots of lovely shots of dinosaurs chewing up aliens!"








OH MY GOD!
POP!
POP!
SPLOTCH!!

COMIC SOHO
KILL RULES

> **“To do a digital comic, where everything is, like, ‘Pow!’, is wonderful. So exhilarating”**

The format itself is attractive to creators, who can fit it around other projects. “It’s easier doing short instalments,” McCrea explains. “When you’re faced with 22 pages in a row it can seem like quite a climb.”

McCrea has previously illustrated comics for display on screens at the Imperial War Museum and on BBC Scotland, but for some other creators, using a new display medium for their work was a revelation.

“I’ve always been in love with home-grown British comics,” Leach says. “I grew up with pulpy, terrible paper. The colours would bleed and after a couple of weeks the paper was brown. But, to do a digital comic, where everything is, like, ‘Pow!’, is wonderful. So exhilarating.”

The format was also new to Kev Hopgood. “I did wonder how I’d tackle it,” he says, “and then I found I was approaching it like a double page spread. Like a Frank Bellamy spread – that’s what I’m going for.”

Hopgood’s strip is a collaboration with writer Ferg Handley, who he’d worked with on *Strip Magazine*, and who’d previously partnered McCrea on earlier screen-based work. “I’d really enjoyed working with Ferg,” Hopgood explains, “so I asked him, ‘Have you any other ideas?’, and he came up with *Legion Zero*, which is all about Roman monster hunters. I’m really enjoying drawing it.”

DIRECT ACCESS

The format of the comic is fairly unique. Rather than being distributed as an app – or through another comics download service – it uses the familiarity of web comics, but asks for payment upfront. As the comic isn’t available as a download, the team hopes this will reduce bootlegging.

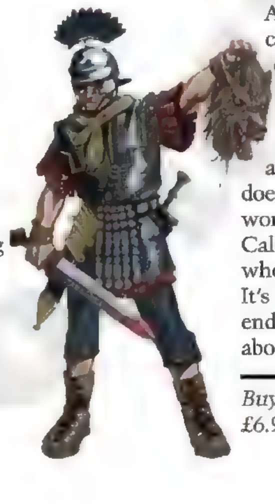
“There’s no accurate way of securing against piracy,” Lloyd explains, “and a screen capture will pirate anything, but we are reducing the possibility. The other thing we’re also doing is offering this at a low price. I’m very concerned about the contributors – the people who actually create such great stories – and want them to be able to go directly to the buyer, avoiding all that other stuff that inevitably takes away so much of the money. I don’t see any reason why we can’t just reach the subscriber directly.”

As well as the other creators contributing to *Aces Weekly*, a large draw for subscribers will be new work by Lloyd himself.

“My strip is called *Valley Of Shadows*,” he says, “and it’s about a future California, where the sun doesn’t shine any more. It’s like the worst nightmare you can imagine: a California that was like England, where it rains a lot, would be horrible. It’s also about an accidental hero who ends up making himself feel better about the world.” **CH**

Buy seven issues of ***Aces Weekly*** *for £6.99 at www.acesweekly.co.uk*

Above: *Aces Weekly* features familiar (well, -ish) faces, such as Combat Colin and Psycho Gran, as well as a selection of never-before-seen stories.



GREEN GIANTS

There's never been a scare comic with the wit, the invention or the ambition of Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing*. Here, Steve Bissette, John Totleben and Rick Veitch – his three most vital artistic collaborators – remember how they reinvented horror. **By Joseph McCabe**

It always starts in a swamp. From the primordial soup that spewed forth mankind to the forested wetland that begat Earth's elemental champion – a 'muck-encrusted mockery of a man', infused with the memories of scientist Alec Holland – they're cradles for the new.

Unlike humanity, however, Swamp Thing – not always the biggest selling character in comics, of course, but without doubt one of the most important – has experienced birth *and* rebirth, most notably in two blinding bursts of brilliance.

The creature's genesis, at the hands of writer Len Wein and artist Bernie Wrightson, was one, the next evolutionary step in horror comics and the culmination of decades of anthology terror titles, from EC's *Tales From The Crypt* to Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* to DC's own *House Of Secrets*, in which Swampie debuted in July of 1971, before earning his own book in October of the following year.

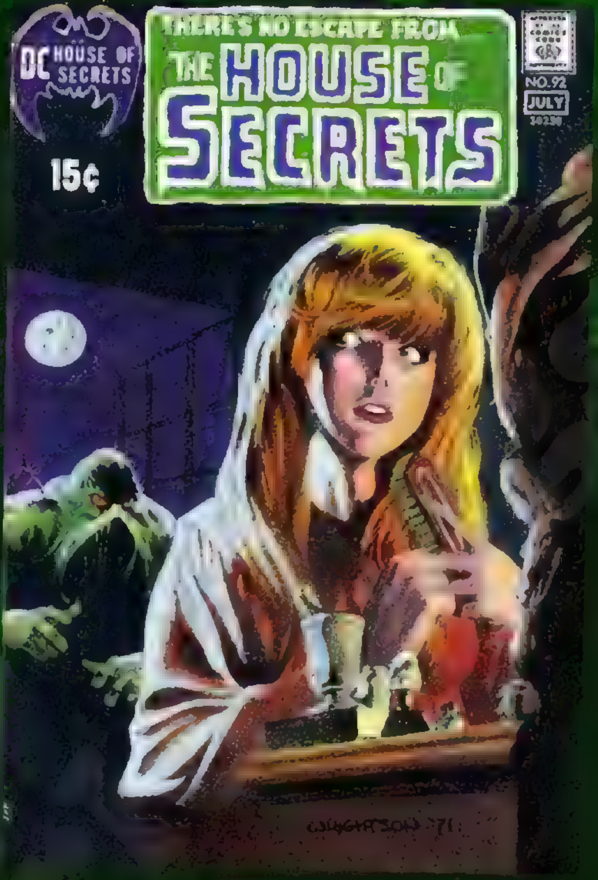
BOG DAYS

Through 10 unforgettable issues, readers were introduced to our moss-covered hero, to the lovely Abigail Arcane, to her satanically evil uncle Anton Arcane, and to all manner of monstrosity that slid and shambled through the Louisiana swamps. Here, Wein and Wrightson crafted comics that could stand proudly alongside Universal's monster classics and the best of Hammer's horror. But – with the same suddenness that they arrived on the scene – the writer and artist parted ways. And though their creation shambled on for several more years at the hands of other talents, the one, true Swamp Thing passed into legend…

Enter John Totleben and Steve Bissette, young graduates of comic book pioneer Joe Kubert's famed New Jersey School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, and *Swamp Thing*'s second, far more sustained, moment of glory.

Raised on a steady diet of B-movies, both men had seen their beloved genre blossom with Wein and Wrightson's creature, then watched *Swamp Thing* wither, along with the anthologies from which it was born. Tired of books that cannibalised their betters, the two artists had grown frustrated at the genre's untapped potential in comics. In movie theatres, horror was flourishing. Filmmakers like John Carpenter, David Cronenberg and Wes Craven were forging new ground, a somewhat treacherous surface on which Swampie could walk once more.

Indeed, it was Craven's creaky, low-budget *Swamp Thing* film that prompted DC to launch a new comic about the muck monster. This time, the company recruited Wein as editor, along with writer Marty Pasko and artist Tom Yeates, another Kubert School alum. The new book had its followers, but after 15 issues Yeates decided to leave, and recommended his friends and former classmates Bissette and Totleben as penciller and inker. They seemed the perfect fit – though they soon discovered Pasko was less than receptive to their new ideas for the title, including taking it further in the direction of 'bleeding edge' horror.

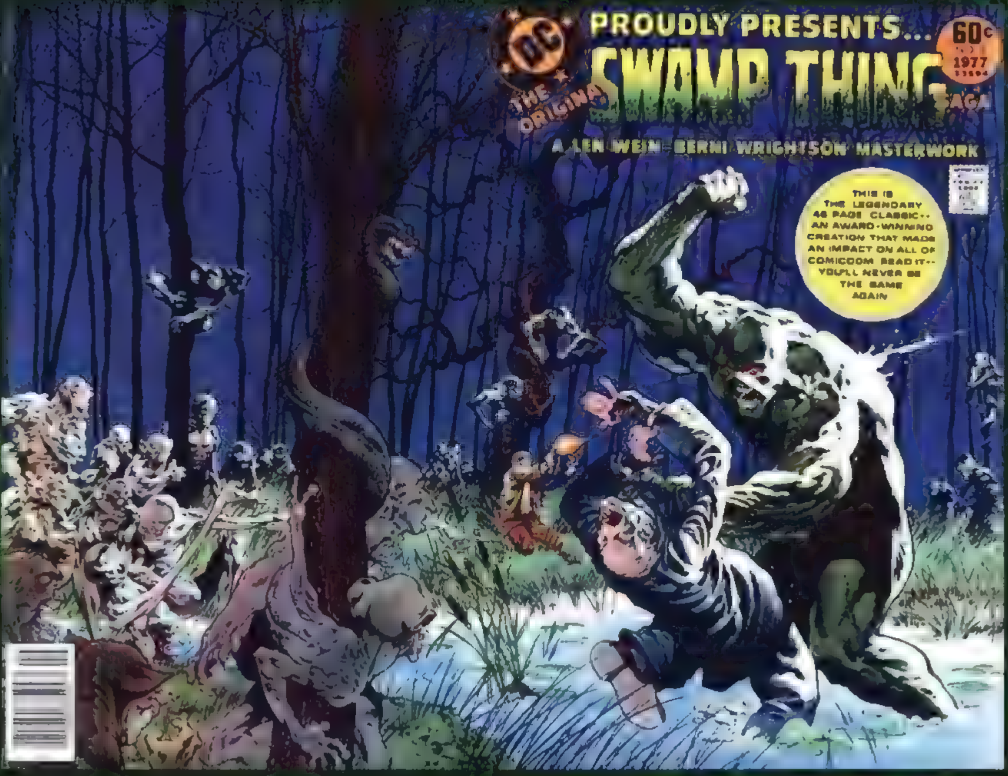


Above: Swamp Thing's first appearance, in a 1971 issue of *House Of Mystery*; the girl (look behind you, dear!) was based on future comics writer Louise Simonson.

"When John and I actually landed the gig," Bissette recalls today, "our first issue was #16. So we did #16, #17, #18 – which was partially a fill-in issue, where we ran a reprint

»

All images © DC Comics


DC
PROUDLY PRESENTS...
THE ORIGINAL
SWAMP THING
SAGA
60¢
1977
A LEN WEIN · BERNI WRIGHTSON MASTERWORK
THIS IS THE LEGENDARY 48 PAGE CLASSIC -- AN AWARD-WINNING CREATION THAT MADE AN IMPACT ON ALL OF COMICDOM. READ IT -- YOU'LL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN

of the last Len Wein/Bernie Wrightson story – and then #19. We had, like, three full issues with Marty, but we didn't even know he'd rejected our ideas until I read an interview with him in a magazine called *Comics Interview*. He was fairly outspoken about the fact that he didn't care for what we had come up with too much."

Bissette laughs as he explains how quickly things changed when Pasko left, and *Swamp Thing*'s scripting chores were given to a young British writer named Alan Moore.

"Alan was basically working in the long form for the first time," Bissette says. "He'd never done a 22, 23-page story before *Swamp Thing* #20, to my knowledge. Everything else he'd done in the UK prior to that was short form – the strips that he did for music magazines like *Sounds* that he wrote and drew as 'Curt Vile'; *Maxwell The Magic Cat*, which he was doing for the Northampton newspaper; all the writing he did on *2000 AD*, the 'Time Twisters' and the self-standing stories.

"My memory is that Alan was letting us all know right from the start – with his script to #20, and the first letters from him that we got – that this was his first experiment with long-form comics. So he was learning as he went. John Totleben had never done long-form before either, outside of a class assignment at The Kubert School. And I had never worked on a periodical comic before *Swamp Thing*. So we were all learning on the job."

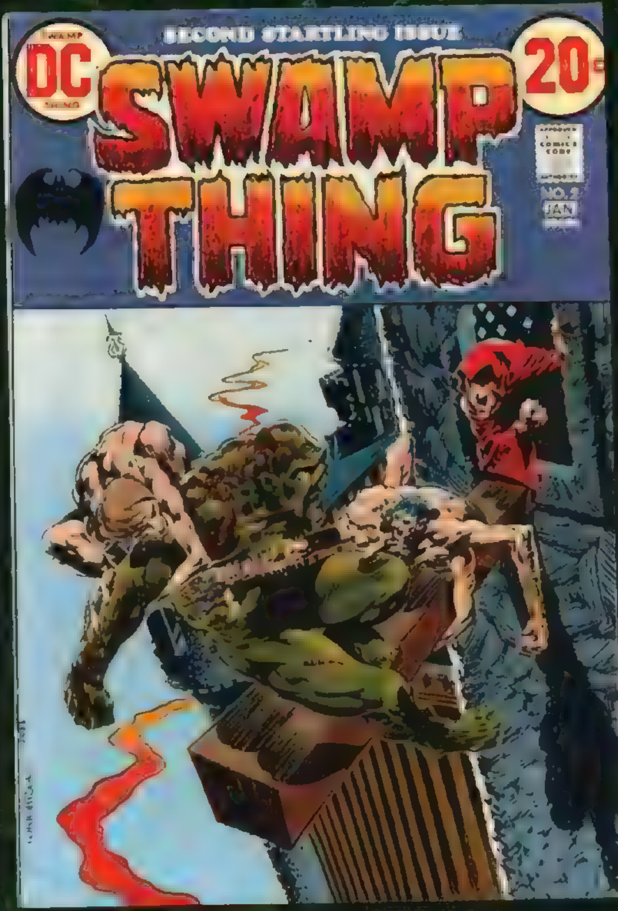
After resolving Pasko's loose ends in issue 20 (pencilled by Dan Day), what has since become recognised as the definitive *Swamp Thing* team arrived, seemingly fully formed, with the award-winning 'The Anatomy Lesson' in #21. It was a story that redefined the strip's lead – it was here that he first learned he never actually had been a human being transformed into a monster, as he'd believed, but rather was a new form of life with the borrowed memories of a dead human.

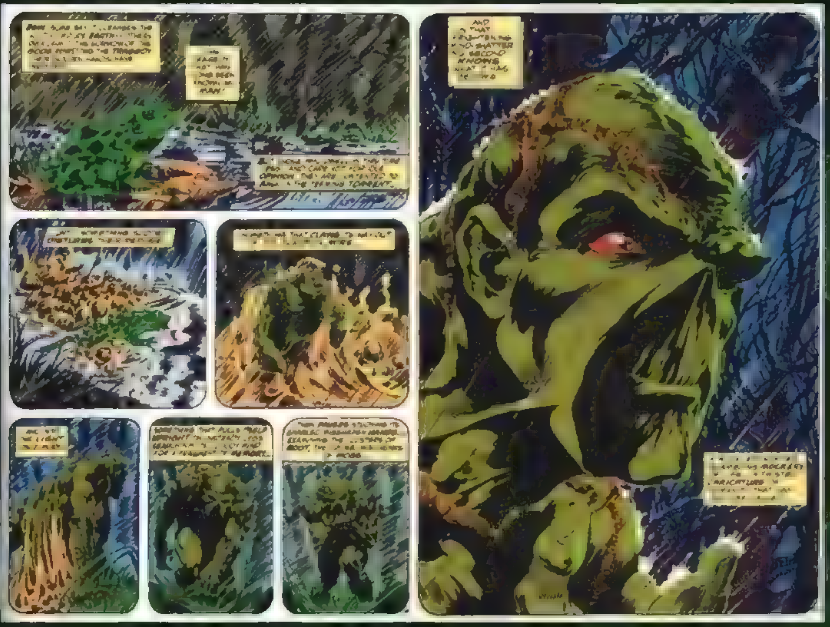
"In our first exchanges of letters with Alan, we all found ourselves on the same page," says Bissette. "Alan and I shared an enthusiasm for a lot of the same filmmakers, for instance. I was, and remain, a huge fan of the British director Nicolas Roeg, and Alan was too. When I got that script to *Swamp Thing* #21, part of my enthusiasm for it was that it was structured, in some ways, like a compact version of a Roeg film.

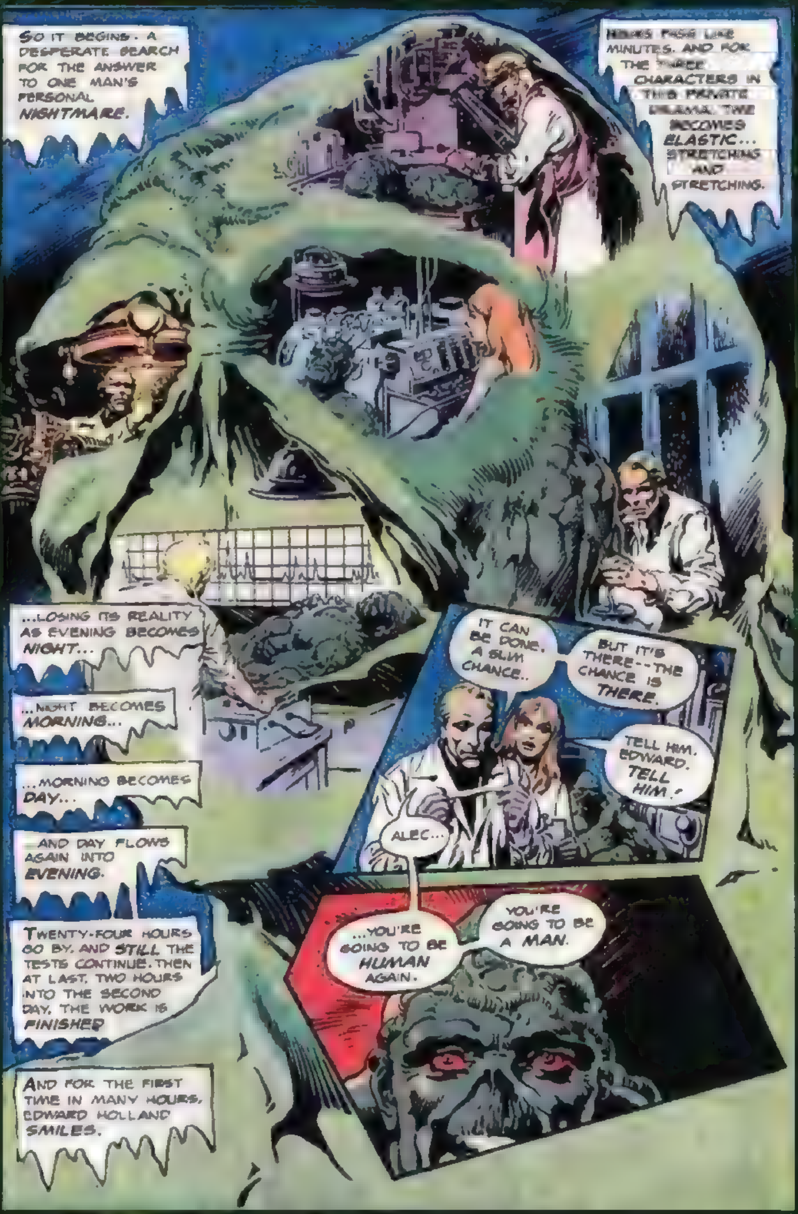
"Meanwhile, John and I shared an enthusiasm for horror movies and comics. We used to go to the horror movies every week when we shared a house in New Jersey with Rick Veitch and Tom Yeates, though I was probably more the reader of the pair of us, in terms of horror. By the time Alan was on board, he was turning us

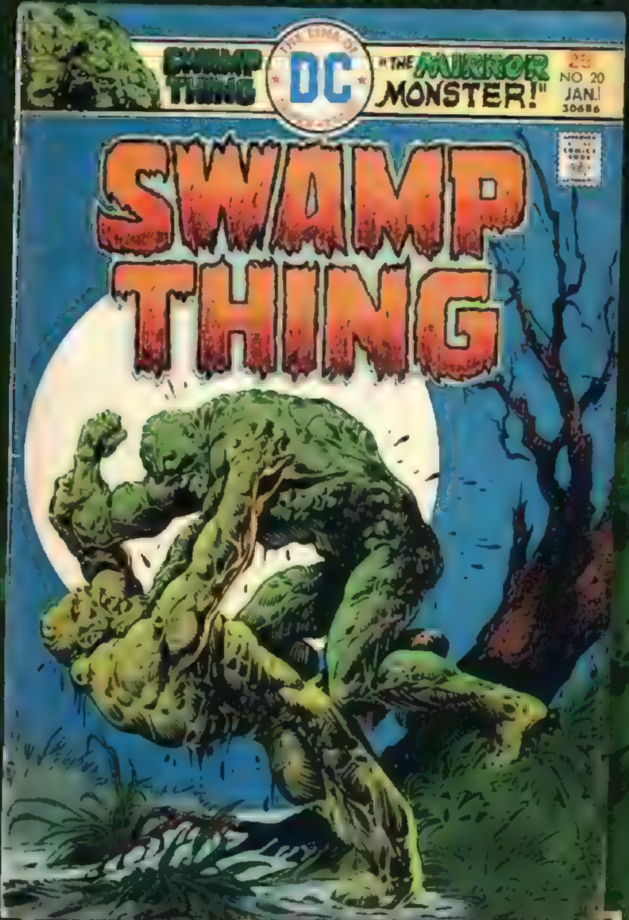
> **"Doing Woodrue as a Hammer Films villain made perfect sense to me"**

Below: The original *Swamp Thing* series, by Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson, played with every horror trope there is. (We're loving the random bat!)






SO IT BEGINS. A DESPERATE SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER TO ONE MAN'S PERSONAL NIGHTMARE.
HOURS PASS LIKE MINUTES, AND FOR THE THREE CHARACTERS IN THIS PRIVATE DRAMA, TIME BECOMES ELASTIC... STRETCHING AND STRETCHING.
...LOSING ITS REALITY AS EVENING BECOMES NIGHT...
...NIGHT BECOMES MORNING...
...MORNING BECOMES DAY...
...AND DAY FLOWS AGAIN INTO EVENING.
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS GO BY, AND STILL THE TESTS CONTINUE. THEN AT LAST, TWO HOURS INTO THE SECOND DAY, THE WORK IS FINISHED.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY HOURS, EDWARD HOLLAND SMILES.
IT CAN BE DONE. A SLIM CHANCE..
BUT IT'S THERE--THE CHANCE IS THERE.
TELL HIM, EDWARD. TELL HIM.
ALEC...
...YOU'RE GOING TO BE HUMAN AGAIN.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE A MAN.


SWAMP THING
DC
"THE MIRROR MONSTER!"
25¢
NO 20
JAN.
30686
SWAMP THING

Above: By the end of the original *Swamp Thing* run, Gerry Conway had him fighting duplicates of himself, grown from a chopped-off arm. Dumb, but the Ernie Chan cover is nice!

on to writers like Clive Barker. Alan was mailing us copies of the original paperback editions of *The Books Of Blood* as they came out; it was while we were doing *Swamp Thing* that the *Books Of Blood* hit, so we really were in the thick of it. Alan, John and I kept saying to each other, 'Why can't we reach the readers of Stephen King?'"

HAMMER HEAD

Though Moore, Bissette and Totleben were, like King, looking to terrify readers with contemporary settings, they weren't above incorporating veteran DC characters and referencing classic horror in their work. For instance, when supervillain Jason Woodrue (aka the Floronic Man) was reintroduced in 'The Anatomy Lesson', the first of four issues in which he would torment Swamp Thing, his visage was that of Hammer icon Peter Cushing.

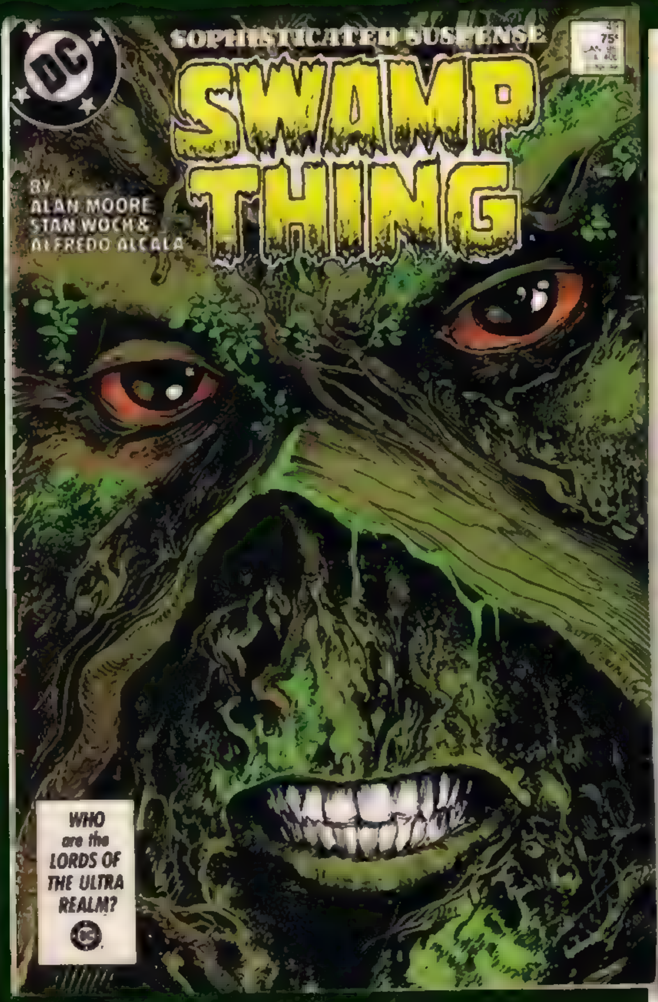
"I didn't know who Jason Woodrue was," admits Bissette. "So I went out to local flea markets and comic shops and pieced together a complete set of every Jason Woodrue story there was, which was hard to do in those days – this was pre-internet. But I was eventually able to get my hands on a reading copy of *The Atom* #1, which I couldn't touch now for love or money if I was looking to buy it…

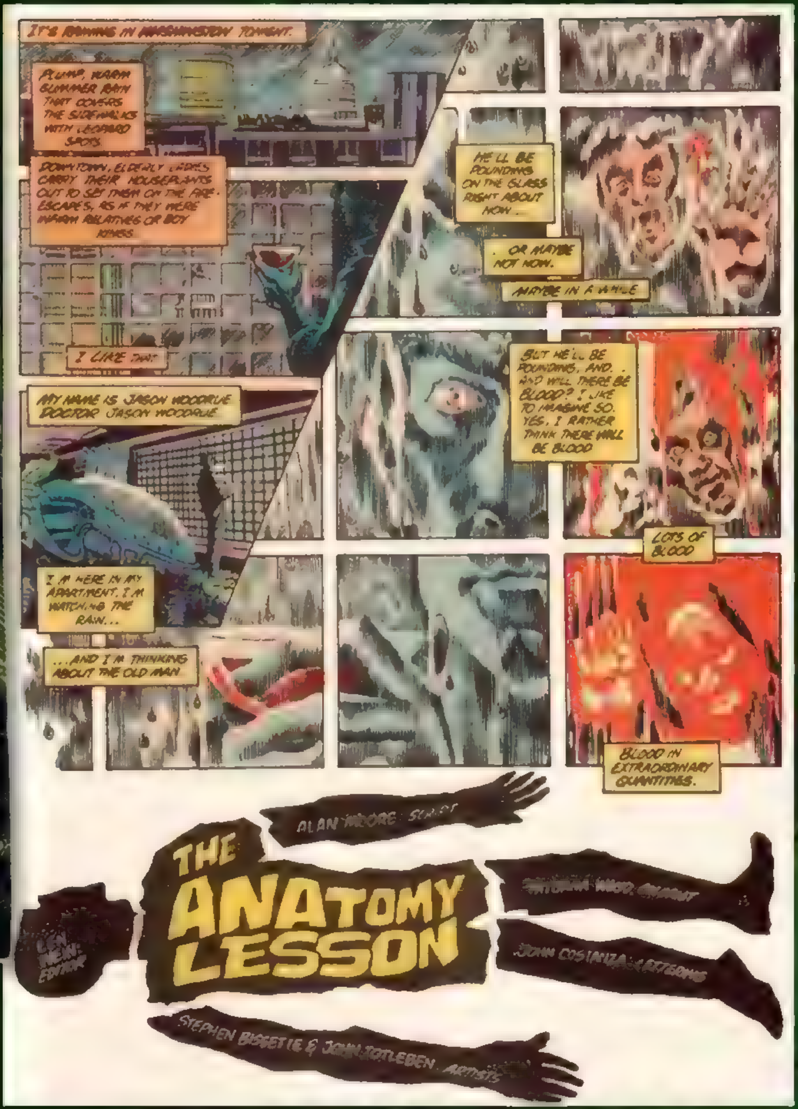
"Once I was reacquainted with Woodrue, the idea of doing him as a Hammer Films villain made perfect sense to me. So, *of course* Peter Cushing is the best Jason Woodrue! John got it, and Len certainly got it. I mean, Len Wein is a huge horror movie fan; his support made it easy to work my own interests into the art."

One such interest was Jack Kirby's *The Demon*, the star of which Bissette and Totleben suggested for a guest appearance in issues #25 through #27, focusing on Elysium Lawns, the school for autistic children at which Abby Arcane worked.

"If it had a horror angle – characters like The Demon, Phantom Stranger, The Spectre – it was fine," Bissette says. "But when Alan brought the superheroes into that storyline [in #24], I was less happy. I didn't even pencil those pages at the end of the Jason Woodrue story; Rick Veitch drove up instead, and worked with me for a couple of afternoons. I didn't want to draw the Green Lantern. I thought, 'Why are we fucking up this horror comic by bringing these superheroes in?' To me, *Swamp Thing* was a horror story, so that was where I wanted to go."

Comics have rarely chilled readers quite as well as with *Swamp Thing*'s 'Love and Death' saga, which began in issue #29 and ran through *Swamp*


SOPHISTICATED SUSPENSE
SWAMP THING
BY ALAN MOORE STAN WOCH & ALFREDO ALCALA
WHO are the LORDS OF THE ULTRA REALM?


IT'S RAINING IN WASHINGTON TONIGHT.
PLUMP, WARM SUMMER RAIN THAT COVERS THE SIDEWALKS WITH LEOPARD SPOTS.
DOWNTOWN, ELDERLY LADIES CARRY THEIR HOUSEPLANTS OUT TO SET THEM ON THE FIRE-ESCAPES, AS IF THEY WERE WARM RELATIVES OR BOY KINGS.
I LIKE THAT.
MY NAME IS JASON WOODRUE. DOCTOR JASON WOODRUE.
I'M HERE IN MY APARTMENT. I'M WATCHING THE RAIN...
...AND I'M THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN.
HE'LL BE POUNDING ON THE GLASS RIGHT ABOUT NOW...
...OR MAYBE NOT NOW.
MAYBE IN A WHILE.
BUT HE'LL BE POUNDING, AND... AND WILL THERE BE BLOOD? I LIKE TO IMAGINE SO. YES, I RATHER THINK THERE WILL BE BLOOD.
LOTS OF BLOOD
BLOOD IN EXTRAORDINARY QUANTITIES.
THE ANATOMY LESSON
ALAN MOORE, SCRIPT
TATJANA WOOD, COLORIST
JOHN COSTANZA, LETTERING
STEPHEN BISSETTE & JOHN TOTLEBEN, ARTISTS
LEN WEIN, EDITOR

Thing Annual #2. It featured the return of Anton Arcane, now inhabiting the body of Abby's husband Matthew Cable, and saw Swamp Thing fight his way to hell and back in a bid to save Abby's soul.

Packed with shocking, poetic imagery, it prompted DC to finally abandon the Comics Code Authority's seal of approval on the book, thus granting the team a freedom they explored in issue #34, the psychedelic classic 'Rite Of Spring'. In this standalone story, Abby and the Swamp Thing finally consummated their relationship, after Abby eats one of the bizarre, hallucinogenic fruit now growing on our hero's body. Bissette reckons the only thing that could improve the issue would be LSD embedded within its pages.

This page: The classic team at work, from the groundbreaking 'The Anatomy Lesson' (above right) to a highly touching (if, we suspect, rather offputtingly messy) case of interspecies romance (below).

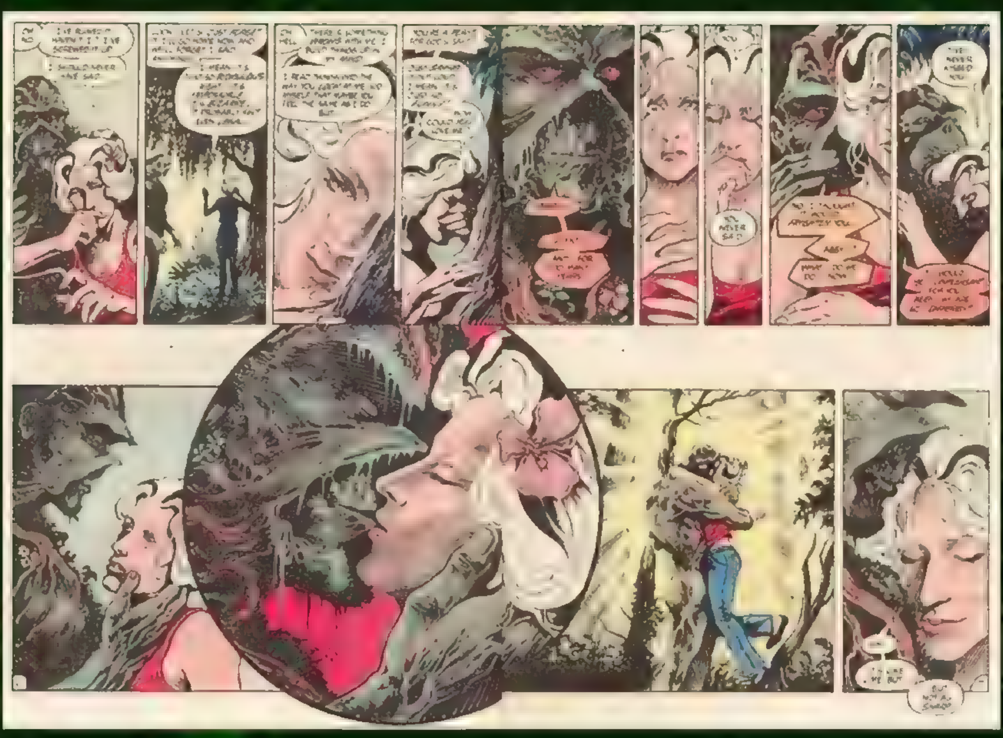
"Well, that would have made it a little better, don't you think?" he laughs. "The whole idea was to have the reader experience the trip as vividly as Abby did. Obviously, that idea did not fly – and was *never* going to fly. It was a joke. But it would have been really great…"

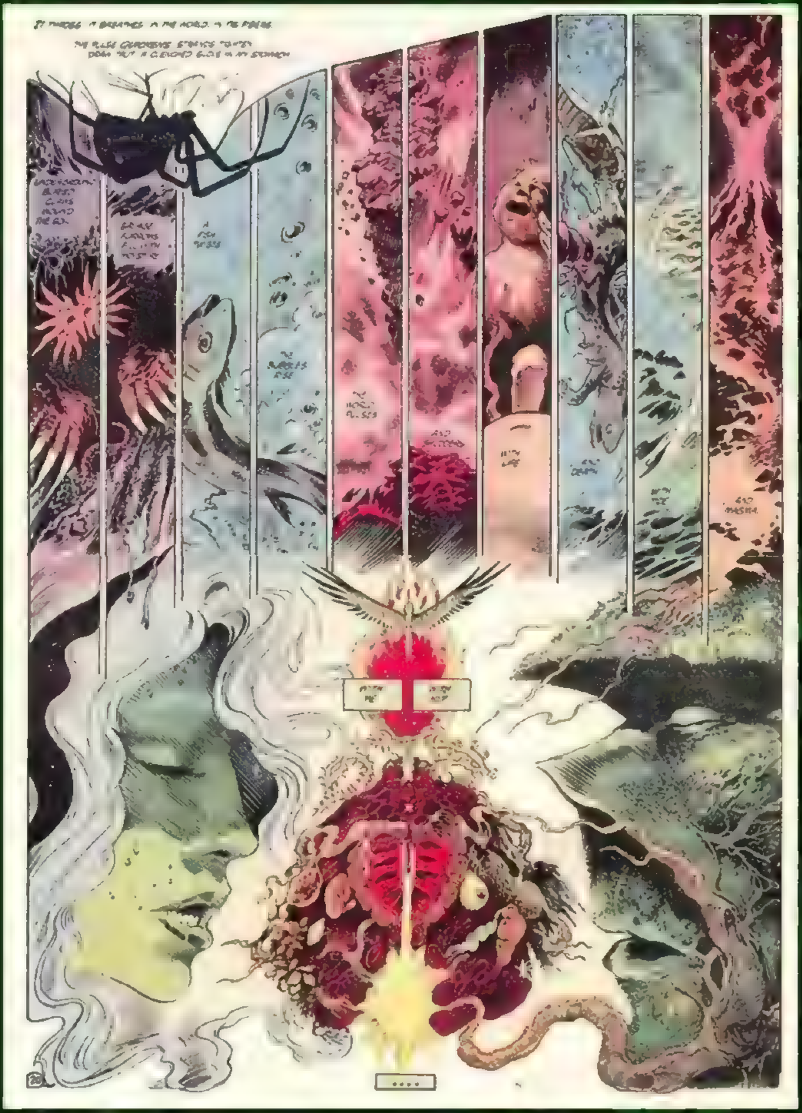
It was certainly an intriguing idea for a love story, and one unique to *Swamp Thing*…

"That issue grew out of a postcard I sent to Alan," he says, "and it was just a one-off thing. We were starting work on the issues in which Abby goes to hell, and I sent a card saying, 'You know, if Abby was a real woman she would be in a mental asylum by now. Is there any way you can convince DC to let us do one issue where it's just Abby and Swamp Thing having a good day in the swamp?'

"Then Alan turned the idea into that beautiful story. To me, we were at a point where we needed to start working in some grace notes with the characters, enjoying some downtime with them. Again, part of that emerged from my love for horror: if it's relentless it gets really monotonous. You want to build an emotional orchestration of effect, where you've got downtime and then you crank up the heat on the stove, so to speak."

That heat next came in the form of Nukeface, the toxic-waste drinking abomination – a broken

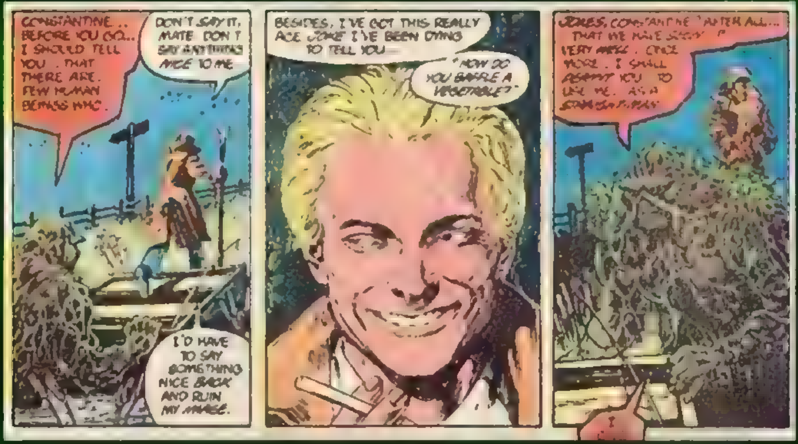




> **“The only thing that could improve the issue would be LSD within its pages”**

tramp, corrupted by his poison of choice – based on a drawing in Totleben’s sketchbook. The character was originally planned to debut in issue #29.

“There were always these ideas floating around,” says Totleben, speaking from his home in Eerie, Pennsylvania. “Nukeface was an idea I had that Steve saw and thought would make a good character. But it took a while to get him in there. With #29 Alan wanted to start the Nukeface story, but Karen Berger [who had succeeded Len Wein as editor] felt that it wasn’t the right time yet, in terms of the basic flow of the storyline. So then, of course, we came up with the whole Arcane/Cable/Abigail incest thing. Karen’s intuition on that was


CONSTANTINE... BEFORE YOU GO... I SHOULD TELL YOU... THAT THERE ARE FEW HUMAN BEINGS WHO...
DON'T SAY IT, MATE. DON'T SAY ANYTHING NICE TO ME.
I'D HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING NICE BACK AND RUIN MY IMAGE.
BESIDES, I'VE GOT THIS REALLY ACE JOKE I'VE BEEN DYING TO TELL YOU...
"HOW DO YOU BAFFLE A VEGETABLE?"
JOKES, CONSTANTINE? AFTER ALL... THAT WE HAVE SEEN? VERY WELL. ONCE MORE, I SHALL PERMIT YOU TO USE ME. AS A STRAIGHT MAN.

SWAMP TRASH

THE TOP 5 WORST PIECES OF SWAMP THING MERCHANDISE

While his name isn’t as suggestive as that of Marvel’s Man-Thing – little is – Swamp Thing has suffered his own share of indignities, due in no small part to the fact that, in licensing the character, DC made what former president Paul Levitz told Steve Bissette was, “the worst merchandising deal in the history of the company”.

“DC had sold Swamp Thing,” says the artist, “lock, stock and barrel to Benjamin Melniker and Michael Uslan, the two producers of the *Swamp Thing* films.” And with these guys in charge of the spin-offs, the results were often hilarious. Here are five of the Earth Elemental’s most infamous spin-off items...

BOG ROVER

DiC Entertainment’s shortlived 1991 *Swamp Thing* animated series (a project somewhat in the spirit of Troma’s Toxic Crusaders cartoon) resulted in a number of children’s toys, including Kenner’s line of action figures and vehicles – of which this is the oddest. Why exactly does the Swamp Thing need a grappling missile?

SWAMP TRAP PLAYSET

Because you never know when a giant Venus flytrap may come in handy!

CHALK

“I’M CHALK”, it announces proudly. *Sigh*. You certainly are, little Swamp Thing. You certainly are.

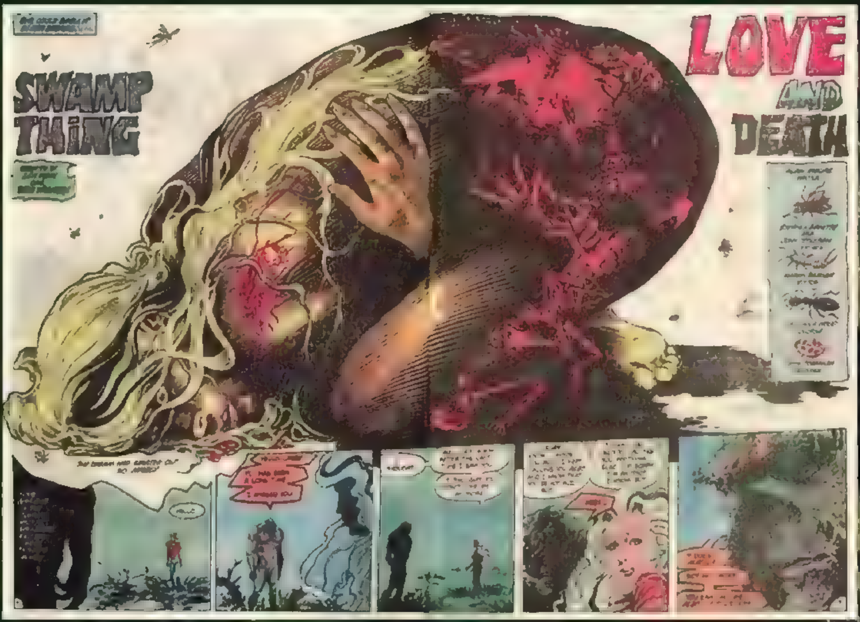
RETURN OF THE SWAMP THING DVD

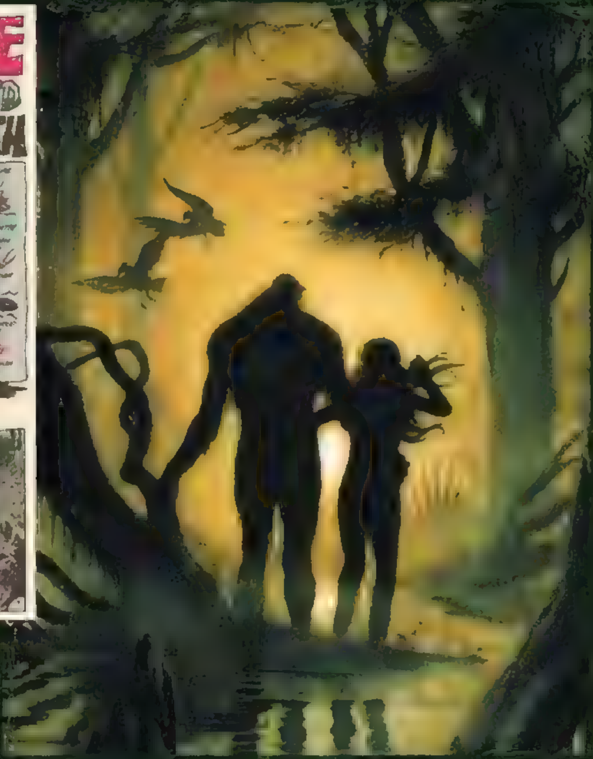
The worst part of this laughable Heather Locklear-starring 1990 movie misfire is its use of the Swampie/Abby love scene from the classic comic book story, ‘Rite Of Spring’. As Alan Moore film adaptations go, this one makes *The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* look like a masterpiece.

CHILDREN’S SLIPPERS

“The nadir of the Plant Elemental’s false idols,” says Bissette on his blog (srbissette.com). “Yep, they’re bright green fuzzy kid’s slippers with the dumbest little bright green hollow plastic Swampy heads imaginable perched (well, actually, glued) atop the isky-li’l toes of the tots who tottered around in ’em.”

SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
Swamp Trap





Above: 'Love And Death' pretty much sums it up; early *Swamp Thing* issues by the Moore-led team concentrated on the horror, and mid-period ones very much on the strange romance.

right on the money; we needed that crucial storyline first, where you really establish Swamp Thing and Abby's relationship. I think Karen saw that – and, of course, once Alan latched onto it he went right to town."

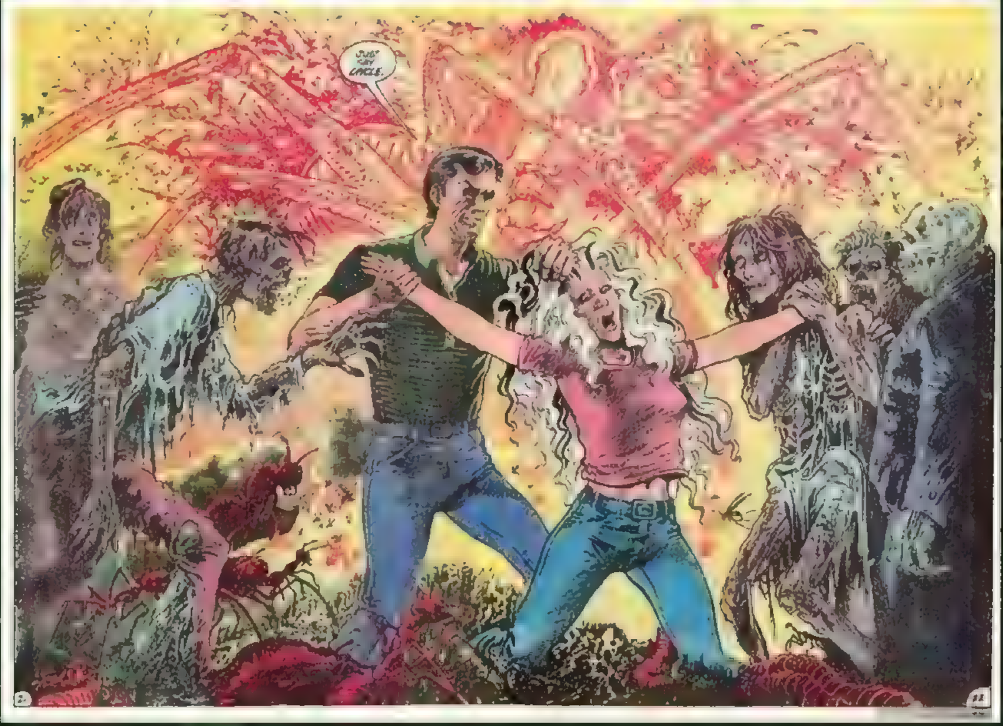
GREEN DAY

In the two-part 'The Nukeface Papers' that followed, Swamp Thing's body was destroyed – but he wasn't killed. Instead, for the first time he sent his mind into 'the Green', the mystical group-mind of all plant life, a new skill he then developed with the help of Moore, Bissette and Totleben's most famous creation – rogue magician John Constantine. Of course, when introduced in issue #37, the occult investigator bore an uncanny resemblance to a certain pop megastar.

"I was a big fan of The Police at that time," explains Totleben, "and I'd read a review of a movie that Sting was in called *Brimstone And Treacle*. I hadn't actually seen it at that point, I'd just read something about it, and it described the character. I thought, 'Man, that would be cool. We need a guy like that, someone who looks a bit like Sting'.

"Initially, of course, he was completely different from what John Constantine ended up being. My original idea was that he'd be sort of a villain that was stalking Abby, and he'd have this weird psychological twisted thing going on: something more in keeping with what was going on in *Brimstone And Treacle*. Alan, of course, had a need for a completely different type of character that actually fit quite well. So, instead of Sting from *Brimstone And Treacle*, he imagined it more as Sting from *Quadrophenia*, where he played a character called Ace Face. Constantine was also similar to Michael Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius. Basically, there was a need for this character, and I think we were all intuiting exactly what that was. But the way it developed, it took on a life of its own."

> **"I thought, 'We need a guy like that, someone who looks a bit like Sting'"**


JUS' SAY UNCLE.

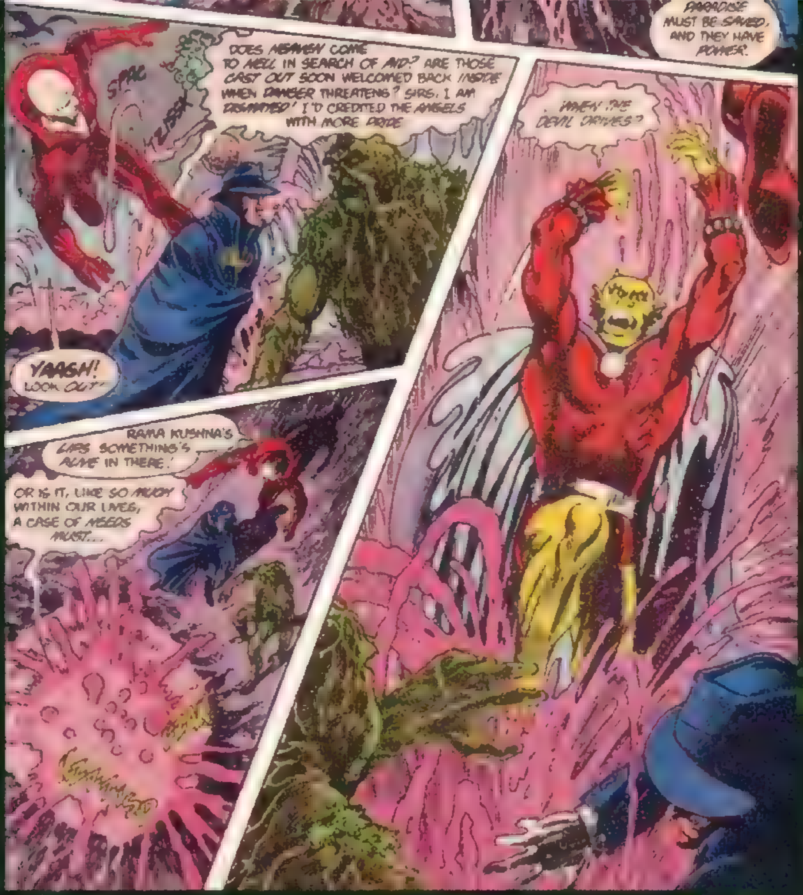
Below: All very grim and lurid, but the 'bad uncle' storyline became one of *Swamp Thing*'s creepiest, most horribly memorable moments.

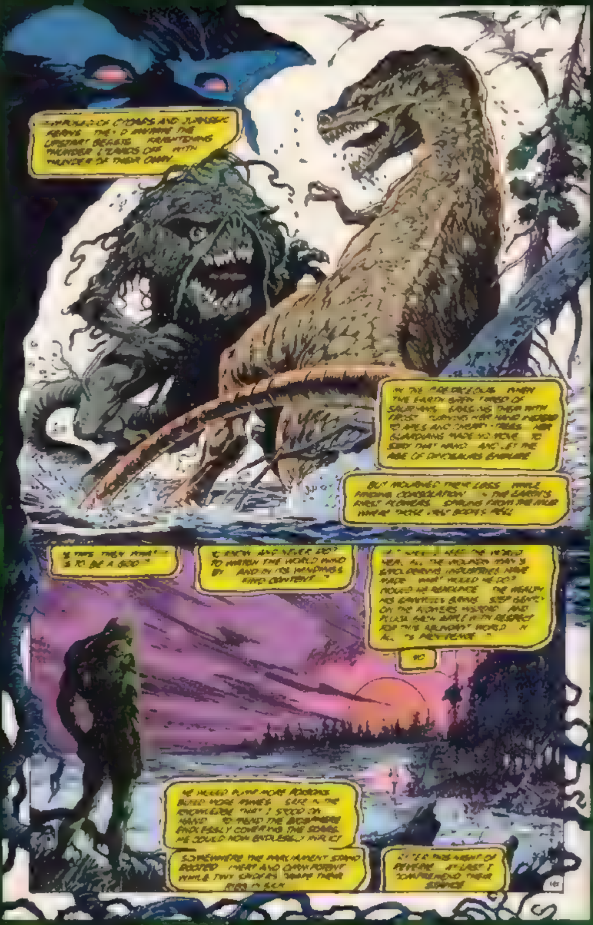
INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

John Constantine served as Swamp Thing's guide through the epic 'American Gothic' storyline, in which Swampie used his newfound abilities to travel the US (and, eventually, South America too). His journey gave Moore the opportunity to turn classic horror tropes on their heads, resulting in mid-western vampire mermen, zombie plantation slaves, New England housewife werewolves, and, of course, serial killers.

"In terms of *Swamp Thing* and 'American Gothic'," says Bissette, "it was very much, 'Let's hit all the key notes of classic horror', but folding in a few contemporary ones like serial killers too. For some of those ideas I was enthusiastic, but others I just couldn't get excited about – to me, that's kind of what Len and Bernie had done. The 10-issue run on *Swamp Thing* that they originally did was, issue after issue, a reinterpretation for their era, the early '70s, of classic horror tropes.

"'American Gothic' was deliberately that too, but it was also the point


PARADISE MUST BE SAVED, AND THEY HAVE POWER.
DOES HEAVEN COME TO HELL IN SEARCH OF AID? ARE THOSE CAST OUT SOON WELCOMED BACK INSIDE WHEN DANGER THREATENS? SIRS, I AM DISMAYED! I'D CREDITED THE ANGELS WITH MORE PRIDE
WHEN THE DEVIL DRIVES?
SPAK
YAAGH! LOOK OUT!
RAMA KUSHNA'S LIPS SOMETHING'S ALIVE IN THERE!
OR IS IT, LIKE SO MUCH WITHIN OUR LIVES, A CASE OF NEEDS MUST...

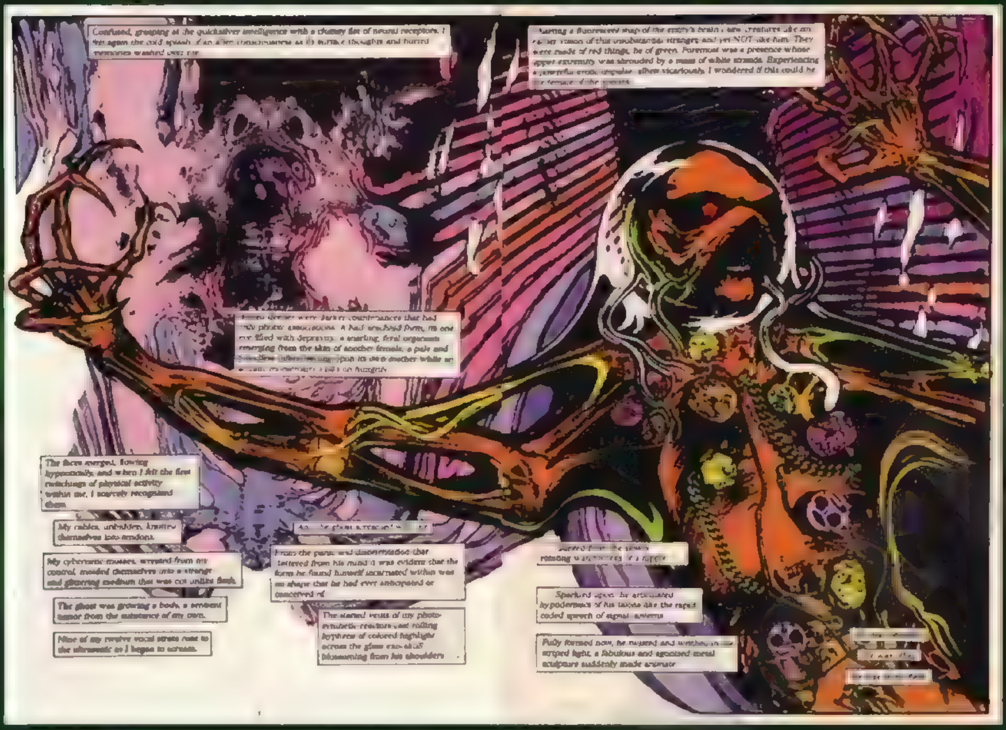


where I began to lose interest. We'd been on the book for a couple of years, and I was frustrated with my situation with DC, and really feeling the crush of ongoing, interminable deadlines, which I'm not good with. I was chafing at the bit as well, because I wanted to try other things – and when you're working on a single project like *Swamp Thing*, if what you want to do doesn't fit the vehicle that you've committed yourself to, then that's it. You can't do it.

"All that was really beginning to sap my interest. I don't think you can see it in the pages I was turning in, necessarily, but you can clock it looking back at the series as a whole, with the number of fill-ins and so forth. I was really getting very distant from what we were doing."

Occasionally filling in for Bissette at this point was his Kubert School chum Rick Veitch, who'd pencilled John Constantine's first appearance in #37, 'Growth Patterns'. After contributing to Bissette's swan song, 'The End', in #50, Veitch took over as regular penciller on the book.

"Knowing that I'm not as deep into horror as Steve and John," Veitch tells us, "when I took over the book Alan began to turn it towards a New Agey, science-fictiony approach. There were still the same characters, but you wouldn't get the screaming horror that the Bissette-Totleben era gave us. Things were much more settled and Swamp Thing's path much more a heroic journey of self-understanding all of a sudden. He's more of a seeker than just a big monster who's being manipulated into all these corporate and sorcerous plans."


My cybernetic masses, wrested from my control, moulded themselves into a strange and glittering medium that was not unlike flesh.
The ghost was growing a body, a sentient tumor from the substance of my own.
Nine of my twelve vocal strata rose to the ultrasonic as I began to scream.
Fully formed now, he twisted and writhed in striped light, a fabulous and agonized metal sculpture suddenly made animate.

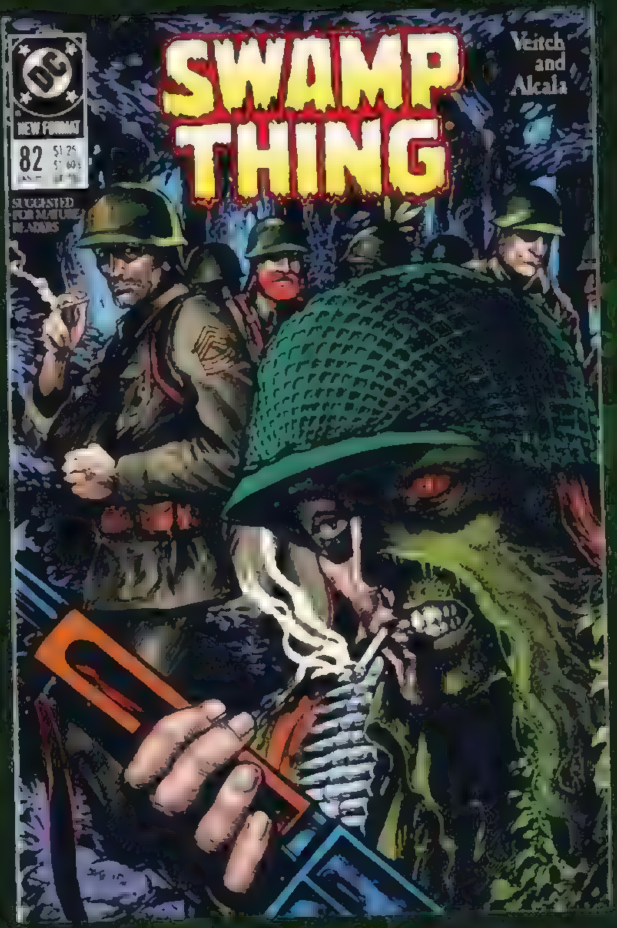
Below: One of the oddest, most 'out there' tales from the Moore book's science fiction-orientated latter issues was #60's 'Loving The Alien', art by Totleben.

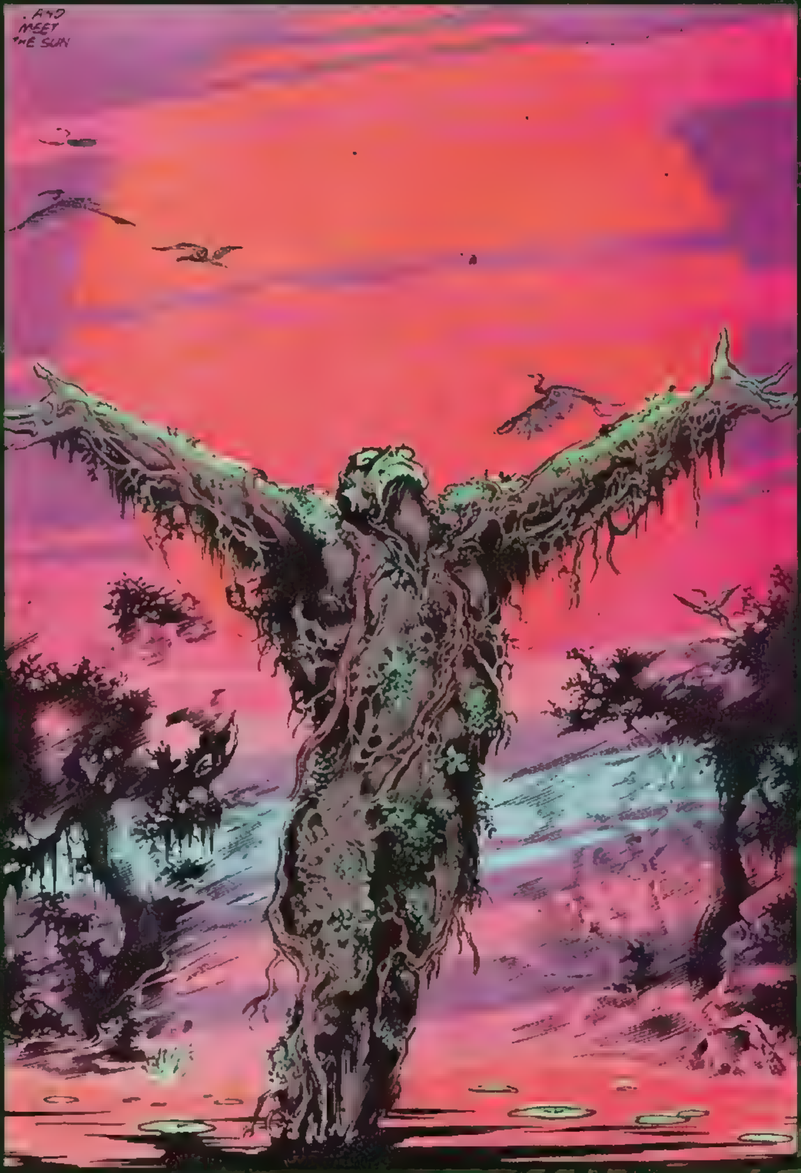
Moore finally left *Swamp Thing* after #56 ('My Blue Heaven'), and the author appointed his friend and colleague as his successor.

"Being in a rock-and-roll band and following the Beatles on stage, no matter how good you are the Beatles are always going to be better," laughs Veitch. "That's kind of the position I was in taking over *Swamp Thing*. Karen, Alan and I used to joke about me committing career suicide by taking it on! But I was perverse enough to do it anyway."

In Veitch's hands, Swampie would embark on his most ambitious voyage yet – one that saw him travel through time. "I got drawn into the time travel sequence so that I wouldn't have to deal with the summer crossover that year," says Veitch. "I figured if I got Swamp Thing off the planet and out of our time zone then *Swamp Thing* comics could just be about that, and they wouldn't have to be a part of whatever that crossover was.

"The other aspect of the time-travel sequence was there were a few DC characters that hadn't been staked out yet by other creative people who wanted to retcon them – that's what was happening at the time – and I wanted to get to them first. And the





This page: Rick Veitch eventually came a cropper with his 'Jesus' issue, but the Biblical parallels had been there since the very first Moore storylines (right); occasionally (bottom) Swampy made like Spragg, the Living Hill.

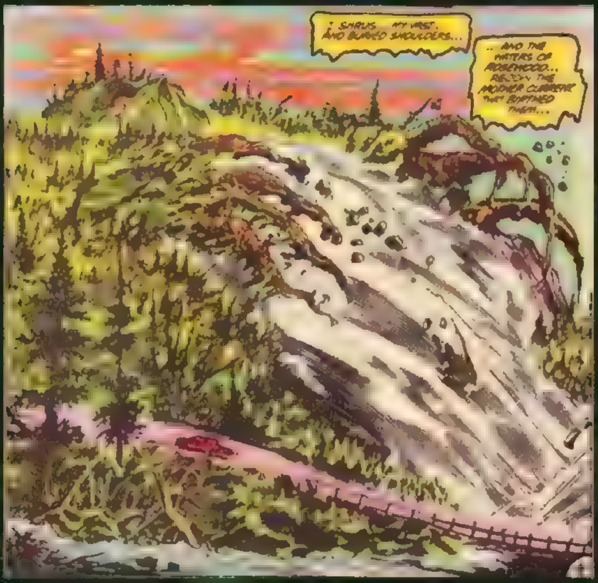
richest vein of available characters was all in the past: the cowboys and the cavemen and the gladiators and the knights and that kind of stuff. I was really attracted by that, and I wanted to get them all into my little sandbox and be able to play with them."

DIVINE INTERVENTION

In hindsight, it's perhaps appropriate that this – the entire run from 'The Anatomy Lesson' onwards proving to be the most fertile period in Swamp Thing's history – truly ended when Veitch had the creature encounter arguably the most famous figure in history, Jesus Christ. It's an issue that, to this day, has not seen print.

"Before I took over *Swamp Thing*, there'd been a huge controversy about standards and practices," recalls Veitch. "[DC president] Jenette Kahn brought in a document saying the comics had to stick to certain things, and they couldn't discuss other things. One of those was using a religious figure in the DC universe. Alan and Steve and John and Frank Miller and a whole bunch of other people had resigned over this very issue, just as I was taking over the book.

> Veitch had the creature encounter Jesus Christ; it's never been printed


...SHRUGS... MY VAST, AND BURIED SHOULDERS...
...AND THE WATERS OF ROSEWOOD... REJOIN THE MOTHER CURRENT THAT BIRTHED THEM...

"I asked DC, 'What's the deal with this, then?' And they said they just wanted to show the outside world that they had these rules, and that, in reality, anything I wanted to do could be done.

"I proposed the story, and DC and I talked out what I wanted to do with it and how to make it palatable. I wrote scripts. It was all approved. Michael Zulli pencilled the book, it was passed on and it was going to be inked – it had already been lettered and everything – when there was a decision at DC's end to shit-can the book. I got a call saying that I had to write a new issue in three days."

So what happened then?

"I was so confused by the whole thing I probably overreacted. In hindsight, I was probably a bit too stubborn and angry. But I said I'd have to resign. I never really understood what happened at their end – and I'm really sad about it to this day, because I shouldn't have left the fans and the characters in the lurch.

"Sadly, I think Swamp Thing and Abby kind of suffered because of how all that played out. A lot of fans stopped buying the book, and DC seemed to have a hard time rebooting it. They were great characters, and they didn't deserve that."

"But," adds Veitch, with a smile in his voice, "It's kind of cool being the guy who did the one story they didn't print. I'm best known for the story that never came out!" CH

Swamp Thing collections are in print.

TUNE IN!

124 pages of the sci-fi TV you love!

6 FREE GIFTS!

- 2 OFFICIAL DOCTOR WHO BADGES
- GIANT FRINGE/ARROW POSTER
- 3 MERLIN POSTCARDS

FREE OFFICIAL DOCTOR WHO BADGES!

SPECIAL SFX EDITION

THE A-Z OF SCI-FI TV

DOCTOR WHO
Steven Moffat on the show's past, present and future

GAME OF THRONES
Everything you need to know about season three

PLUS! 10 SHOWS THAT CHANGED TV FOREVER!

124 PAGES OF SCI-FI AND FANTASY TELLY

CELEBRATING THE BIGGEST TV SHOWS OF ALL TIME

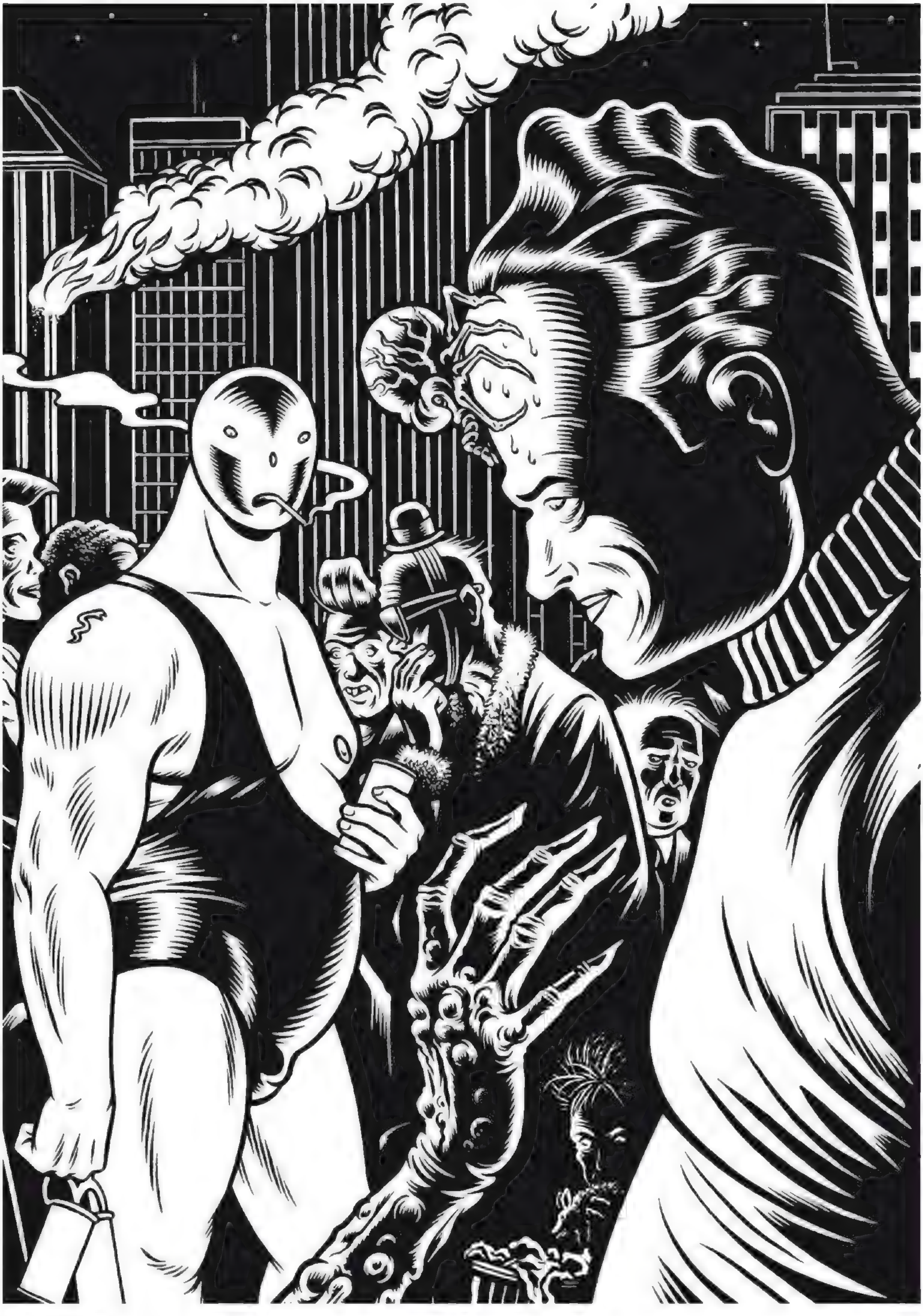
STARRING: Buffy, Blake's 7 reunited, Star Trek, The X-Files, Merlin, The Walking Dead, Battlestar Galactica

ALSO ON: 2013'S HOTTEST SHOWS • FRINGE • TWIN PEAKS • GHOSTWATCH • HE-MAN • THE PRISONER • LOADS MORE!

In print • On iPad • On iPhone

ON SALE NOW!

www.sfx.co.uk/scifiTV



MONSTERS WITHIN

Packed with surreal, existential horror, Charles Burns' work references the greats – while never remotely resembling them. By Paul Gravett

Strange things can come out of the sleepy suburbs. Charles Burns was raised in Bethesda, Maryland, on a diet of the schlockiest trash culture, from exploitation films on late-night TV to monster magazines, bubblegum cards and, of course, all the classic old horror, crime and romance comics.

"My father was a scientist who once wanted to be a cartoonist," he says, "so I was able to read comics without being told they were going to rot my mind. As a result, my mind rotted."

His earliest comic book work, published in 1981 in the third issue of Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's high-end alternative comics magazine *RAW*, reveals a nightmare that has been obsessing him ever since: the queasiness at our physical and mental mutations, especially those triggered by the sexual awakenings of adolescence, and more broadly the fear of losing control of our bodies through accident, disease, surgery or worse. His work is about unleashing the monsters within us all.

In *And I Pressed My Hand Against His Face*, the flush of young romance sparks a kaleidoscope of weird connections: images of biological cross sections, Japanese monsters and insects breeding. Wackier, but no less unsettling, are the ideas behind *Dog Boy*, in which a loser is given a dog's heart during an illegal transplant operation. When the animal's instincts take over, he can't stop himself licking his girlfriend's face and sniffing other girls' bottoms.

MASTER STROKES

Perhaps partly as a reaction to a dread of losing control, Burns hones his inky lines with extraordinary precision and hard edges, resonant of the industrialised polish of Johnny Craig, Jay Disbrow, John Romita and other comic book stylists he grew up devouring. Burns makes the shadows and textures on skin, hair, clothes and vegetation shimmer and pulse with painstaking brushstrokes as sharp-toothed as a chainsaw.

Robert Crumb, no less, has hailed Burns' artwork as 'almost inhuman'. Though tinted at times in flat colours, his is a black-and-white world – more black than white, in fact, saturated with the darkness of the soul.

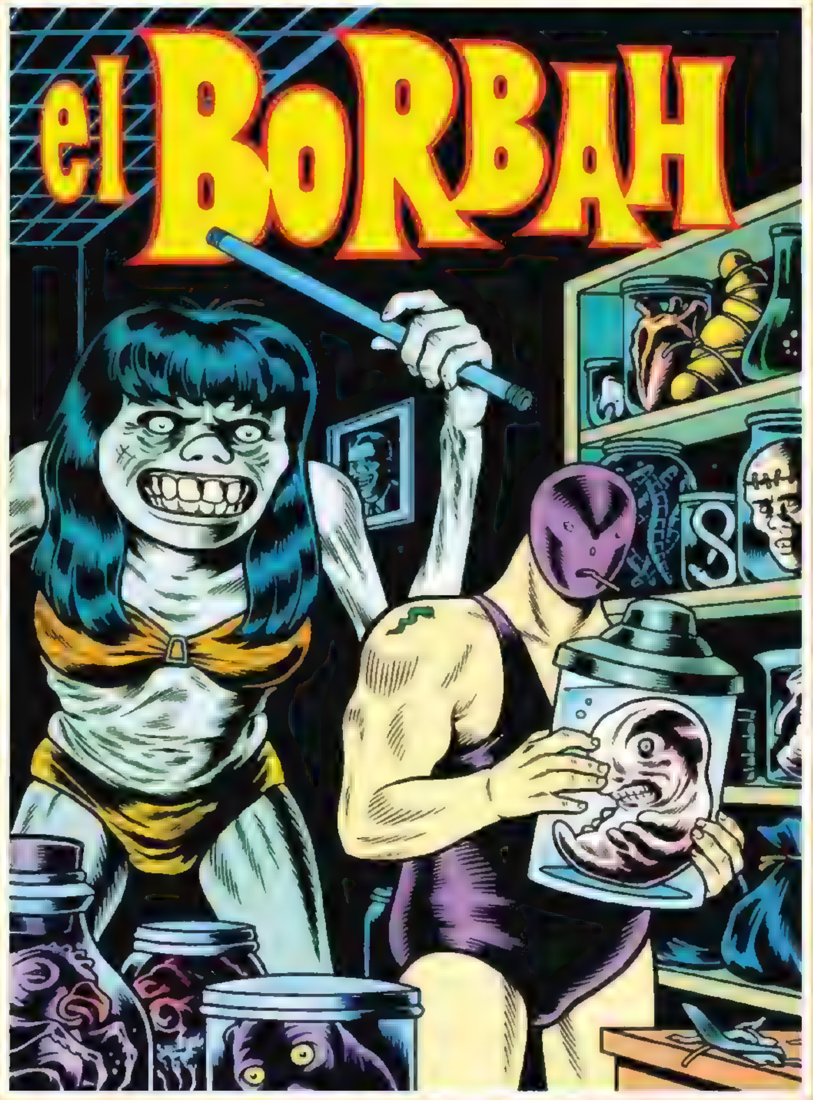
In his subsequent longer stories for *RAW*, Burns reinterpreted familiar romance and horror tropes into surprising twisted shapes. Tapping into his childhood, *Big Baby* is a bald, withdrawn boy with an overactive imagination and a sleepwalking problem. *In Curse Of The Molemen* (1986), the kid's fascination with movie monsters becomes blurred with what lurks beneath the veneer of respectability: his parents' lies and a neighbour's domestic violence towards his wife. As Burns explained, "He's a kid who's trying to make sense of this unfathomable reality, the horror of real life".

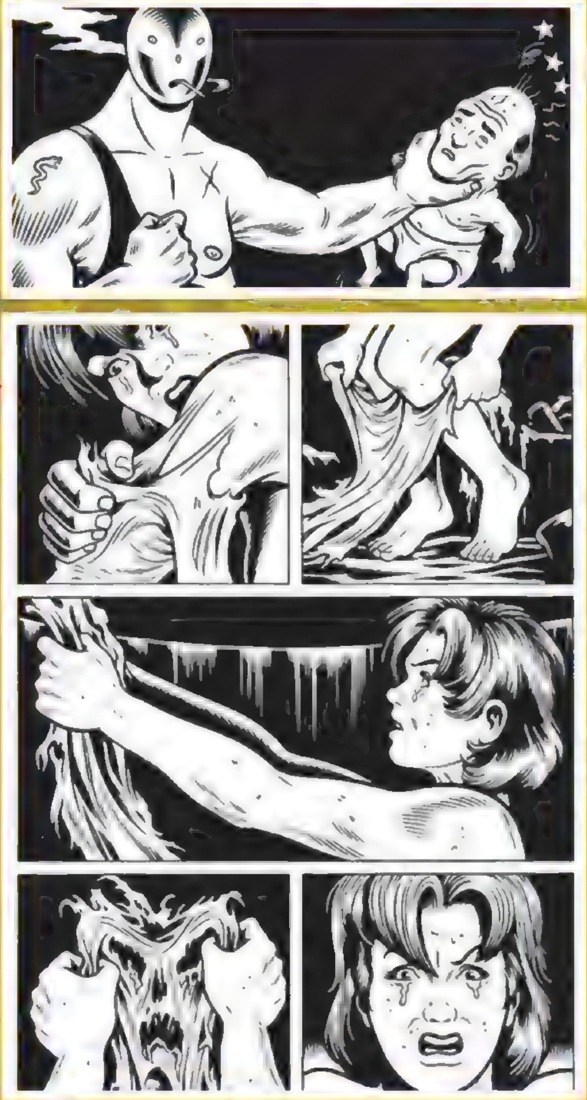
In contrast, Burns' passion for the photo-comics and movies starring Mexican super-wrestlers like El Santo, oversized men in their crazy masks, inspired another of his recurring characters. El Borbah, the overweight wrestling detective, appeared in *Heavy Metal* magazine. A "pissed-off, money-grubbing, beer-drinking guy with no moral scruples," he barged through a string of bizarre *Hard-Boiled Defective Stories*.

Burns also syndicated his own weekly strip, expanding *Dog Boy* and his *RAW* story, *A Marriage Made In Hell*, as well as parodying sinister cults and Jack Chick's evangelical

»

Opposite page: Spandex-clad man mountain El Borbah, star of *Hard-Boiled Defective Stories*





comic strip tracts in *Burn Again*. Increasingly in demand from bands, magazines and advertisers as an illustrator, Burns also branched out by designing the sets and costumes for *The Hard Nut*, an innovative version of *The Nutcracker* ballet produced by Mark Morris.

FREAK SHOW

In 1995 however, the siren call of comics lured Burns back to the drawing board to develop his body horror fixation into one of his best-known works, *Black Hole*. Raging hormones and a contagious plague are mutating a group of high school students: Keith sheds his skin like a snake, Chris grows a tail, and others fare much worse.

Spanning a dozen 32-page issues over 10 years, Burns took his time unravelling the anxieties and alienation of being a teenager, with acutely observed internal monologues, and by revealing encounters from more than one viewpoint. An escalating sadness and dread pervade every page. 'The bug', a mysterious, sexually transmitted pandemic, is mutating a group of American high-school students, who all perceive themselves as freaks.

Burns has said that *Black Hole*'s characters and events are directly based on his life growing up in suburban Seattle during the '70s: "Not that my friends had strange growths coming out of their necks, but I really did feel like I was some kind of diseased teen," he says.

While parallels with Aids are obvious, this is no simplistic cautionary tale. Burns is not interested in explaining the plague's origins or meanings, nor the search for its cure. Instead, he explores how the plague changes these young people's identities, and their relationships with each other and the so-called normal world. Rather than the disposable cipher victims of slasher B-movies, these are vulnerable, sympathetic misfits, adrift and at the mercy of peer pressure and their sex drives.

And while horror's here all right, much of it is kept out of view or understated, working on the reader's imagination and making the revelatory moments all the more disturbing. In one close encounter, while first making love to her boyfriend Rob, the uninfected Chris discovers a tiny second mouth just below his T-shirt.

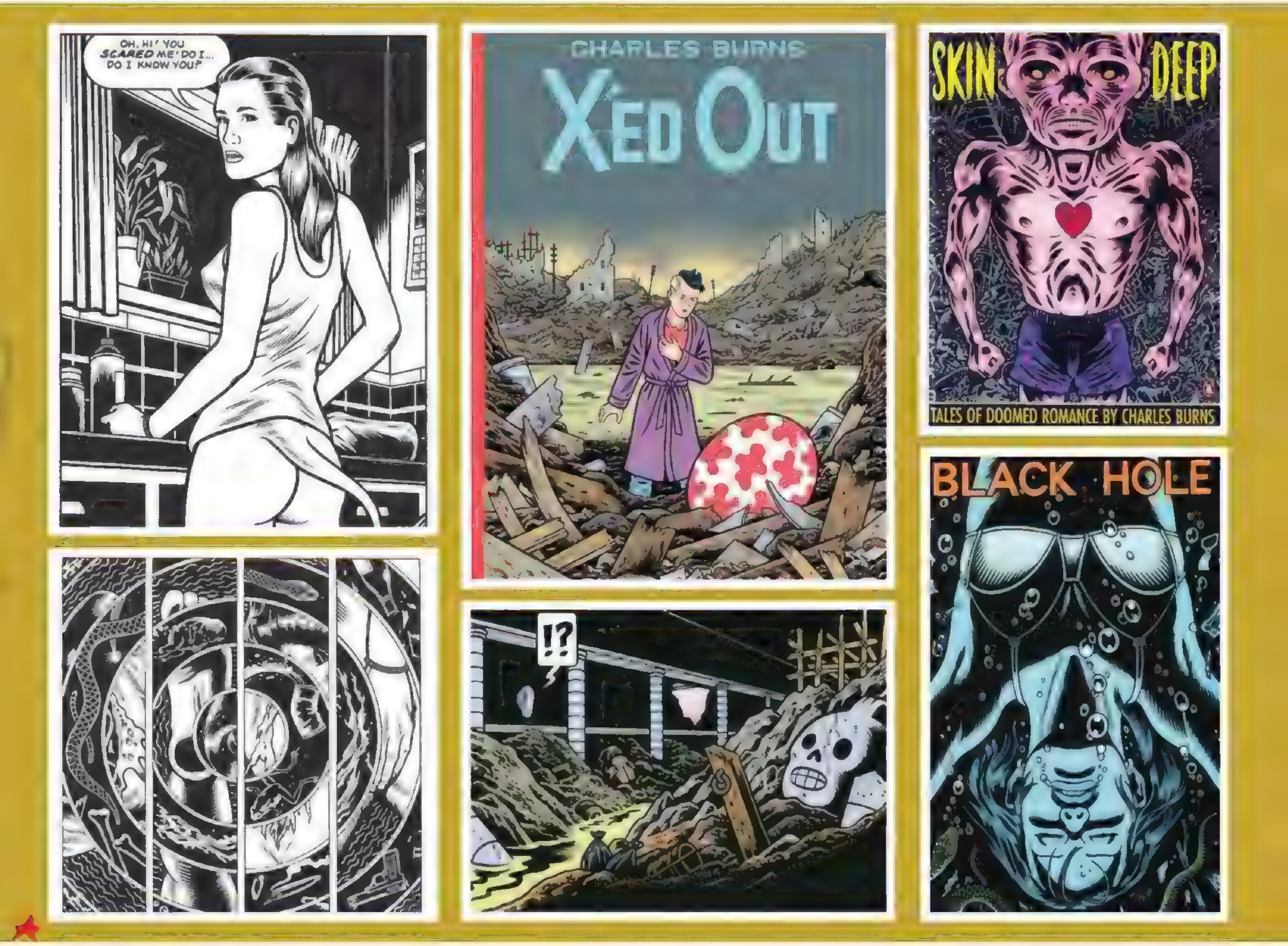
Everything falls apart after Rob infects Chris. Shunned by society, they join the other mutated kids hiding out in the woods in a fragile supportive community.

Burns keeps the reader off-balance and alert, moving in and out of nightmares, drug-induced trips, flashbacks and flashforwards, deliberately blurring the boundaries between memory and fantasy. Profoundly unsettling, *Black Hole* exposes through psychological and biological intimacy the desperate desire for acceptance.

Several creatives have been linked to projects to adapt *Black Hole* into a live-action movie, including Neil Gaiman and David Fincher. In the meantime, an original Burns tale was the opener to the French animated ensemble *Fear(s) of the Dark*.

Creepily medical, it charts the awful fate of a timid biology student whose sweet first girlfriend changes after an insect bite into a terrifying sadist. Despite some awkward body movements, it's chilling to experience

Above Gimp-masked crimefighter El Borbah, left and top right, is more brawn than brain Right, Keith sheds his skin in body horror *Black Hole*


OH, HI! YOU SCARED ME! DO I... DO I KNOW YOU?
CHARLES BURNS
X'ED OUT
SKIN DEEP
TALES OF DOOMED ROMANCE BY CHARLES BURNS
BLACK HOLE
!?

Above: They're themes that are all subtly presented, but sex, fear and horror are usually high in Burns' mix.

> **“ I'm trying to create stories with the same strong, rich atmosphere ”**

Burns' graphic horrors in motion and sound on the big screen.

Those horrors fill his latest print project, a trilogy of large, cloth-spined hardbacks, deliberately reminiscent of vintage *Tintin* albums, a formative influence. “I spent countless hours staring at their back covers and fantasising about the characters and imagery from the books I didn't own, like *The Black Island*”, Burns recalls. “That castle looming off in the distance was incredibly mysterious and potent. When I finally read that story in my late teens, it couldn't possibly live up to my expectations. Perhaps now I'm trying to create the dark, mysterious world I saw in that tiny drawing in these new books. At least I'm trying to create stories with the same strong, rich atmosphere. Mine are just a bit darker.”

In the opening episode, *X'ed Out* (2010), the bedridden, self-medicating protagonist Doug complains to his girlfriend that she doesn't understand him: “If you could look inside my head, you'd know.”

This is exactly what Burns invites the reader to do, as the youth laments, “...the images slip in, seep down into the back of my head and come up behind my eyes. The same stuff over and over again.”

While Doug's avatar has dots for eyes, a button nose and small black quiff, resembling Hergé's boy reporter, once we meet his black cat Inky (the opposite of white dog Snowy), we realise this is no slight pastiche, but a distorted, looking-glass Tintin, with bandages on his head and terrors inside it. Waking up, Doug is more realistically drawn, recuperating from a head wound, a book of ‘Nitnit' and Polaroids on the bed. These transport him back to a cool art-party, where he performs in a creepy Tintin mask. But who is performing, or dreaming?

In the second part, *The Hive*, out this October, Burns continues to channel Hergé's universe, while adding a heady dose of '60s DC romance comics and artists like Tony Abruzzo. Burns' versions, however, are no bland, Code-neutered love stories, but steamy serials tangling sex, abortions, bondage, narcotics and other taboo subjects.

With this trilogy, concluding with *Sugar Skull*, Burns feels he's getting closer to depicting how his brain actually works. “Doug isn't really a fictional version of me but his experiences, both internal and external, reflect my own. Though I was never as good-looking as most of the characters I draw. And I never got to meet a girl with a tail. Not yet anyway.” CH

__The Hive__ was released in October. The concluding part of the series, __Sugar Skull__, is due, we suspect, in 2014.

WELCOME TO ISSUE 16 OF COMIC HEROES!!

This section has been designed so you the Comic Dealer can afford to promote your business from as little as **£25.00.**

Why not give me a call today on

01225 44244

to discuss getting your shop or mail order business promoted!!

moving pictures

Film & TV related toys, gifts, collectables, games & clothing

3a Silver Street, Ottery St Mary, Devon EX11 1DB
01404 812774 movingpicturesdevon.co.uk

American GRAFFITI
.The Comics Specialist.

[illegible]

78 Church Lane (Off High Street.) Barnstaple
Devon EX31 1BH
Tel: 01271 325748
e-mail shop@amgrafcomics.co.uk

COMIC HEROES

IncognitoComics.com
EST 1989

INTO COMICS?

OVER 1 MILLION ITEMS FROM THE 1930'S ONWARDS
COMICS - ACTION FIGURES - TOYS - STATUES - BUSTS - AUTOGRAPHS - GRAPHIC NOVELS - MANGA
75,000 UNIQUE ITEMS FOR SALE ONLINE!

JOB DONE!

INCOGNITO COMICS & COLLECTABLES, PO BOX 431, DOVER, KENT CT16 9ED
TEL: 01304 832335 EMAIL: SALES@INCOGNITOCOMICS.CO.UK

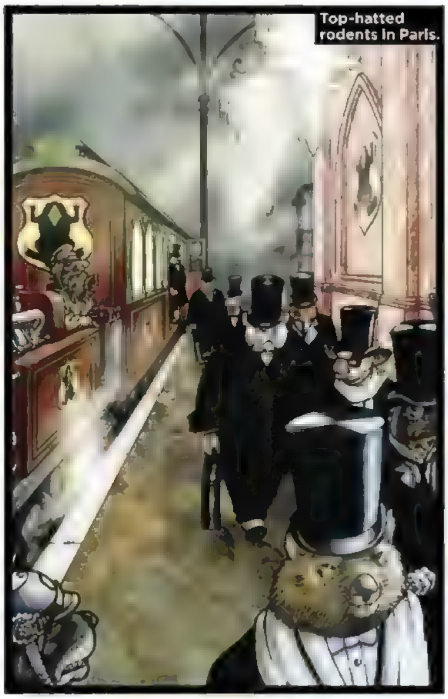
EBAY POWER SELLER - AMAZON PREFERRED SELLER
LISTED AS: INCOGNITO COMICS AND COLLECTABLES

JOIN US @ INCOGNITOCOMICS

All Marvel characters and the distinctive likeness(es) thereof are Trademarks & Copyright © 1941-2012 Marvel Characters, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

GRANDVILLE BETE NOIRE

Hot badger-on-badger action in this sophisticated, ever-inventive steampunk extravaganza...



Top-hatted rodents in Paris.

WRITER/ARTIST: Bryan Talbot

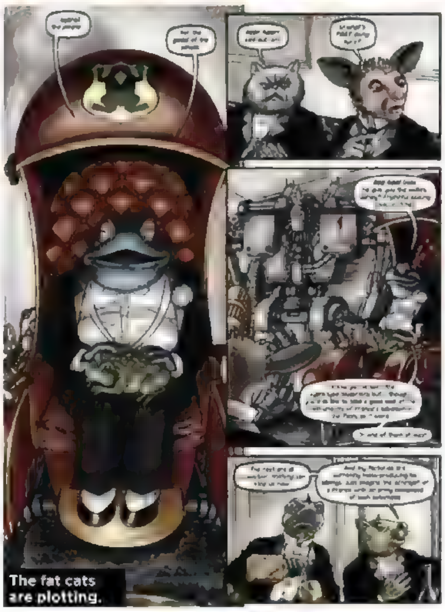
PUBLISHER: Jonathan Cape

OUT: Now

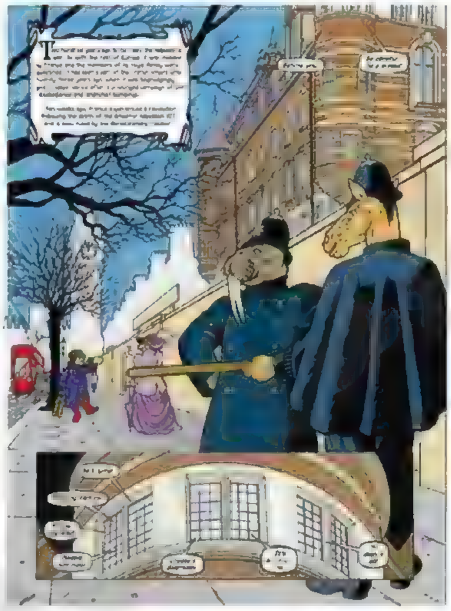
★★★★

Bryan Talbot's *Grandville* series of sleek graphic novels – French-themed steampunk adventures in a French album format – is now on its third instalment, and starting to feel like a major achievement, perhaps one to even eclipse his mighty *Luther Arkwright* adventures in the hearts of long-term fans.

It's a world of talking, two-legged Victorian beasts – anteater artists and walrus policemen – in which DI LeBrock of Scotland Yard, a handsome, two-fisted badger, investigates mysteries across London and Paris that inevitably reveal much about this strange world, where almost 007 villain-style industrialists resemble Toad of Toad Hall, the few humans we see are a slave underclass referred to as 'doughfaces', and a troubled French empire continues to dominate, though the cracks are definitely starting to show.



The fat cats are plotting.



Talbot's art is clean and detailed: he handles action sequences with aplomb, and rises to the challenge of rendering such easy-to-get-wrong players as a sexy naked female badger, say, with ease. But it's his plotting and storytelling that impress yet more, mixing high adventure with clear political points seamlessly. He also has fun with art history – at one point we visit Au Lapin Agile, the real-life Montmartre bar frequented by many an artist during La Belle Époque – and presents outrageous plot twists that, incredibly, are only pushed a degree or two beyond the stuff that happened in our real-life history. There's some Alan Moore-style winking at the audience as we go – a drunk, tramp-like Paddington Bear shows up at one point – and a decent locked room mystery to unwind, but it's the world-building that really excites the imagination. Events are building to something, and though you could quite easily leap into this instalment blind (as with *Tintin*, it doesn't much matter which volume you get to first), investing in all three is really the only way to go. This is one of comics' most thrilling upside down worlds. **Matt Bielby**

NEW COMICS REVIEWED, RATED, AND ARGUED OVER – SOMETIMES ENDLESSLY

Justice is Served!

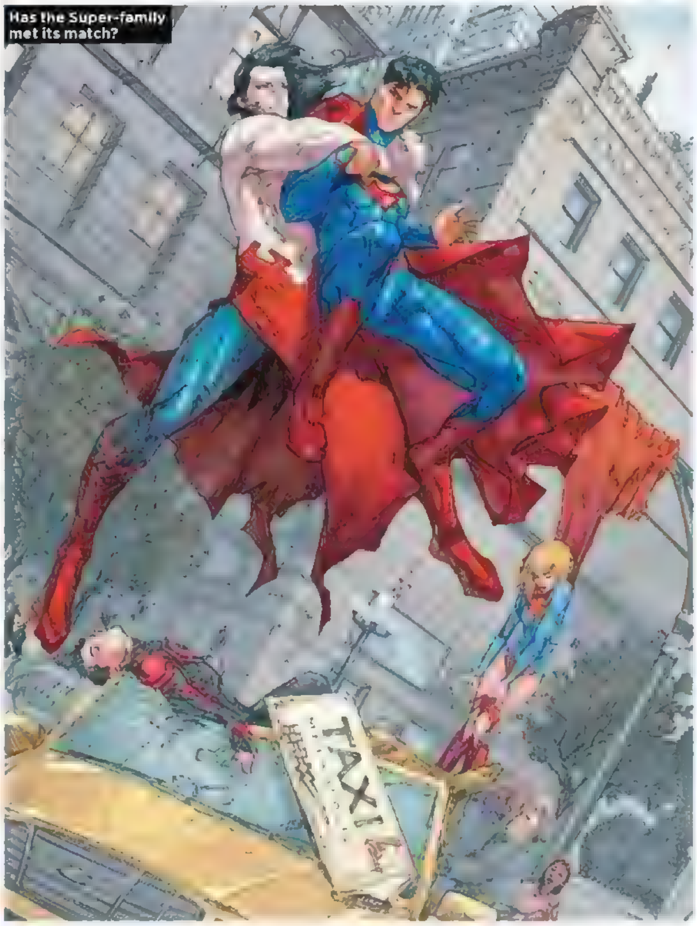
Our ratings explained, fearsome-beast style

SHAKO	★★★★★
HOOK JAW	★★★★
ROCKET RACOON	★★★
ACE THE BAT HOUND	★★
MS LION	★

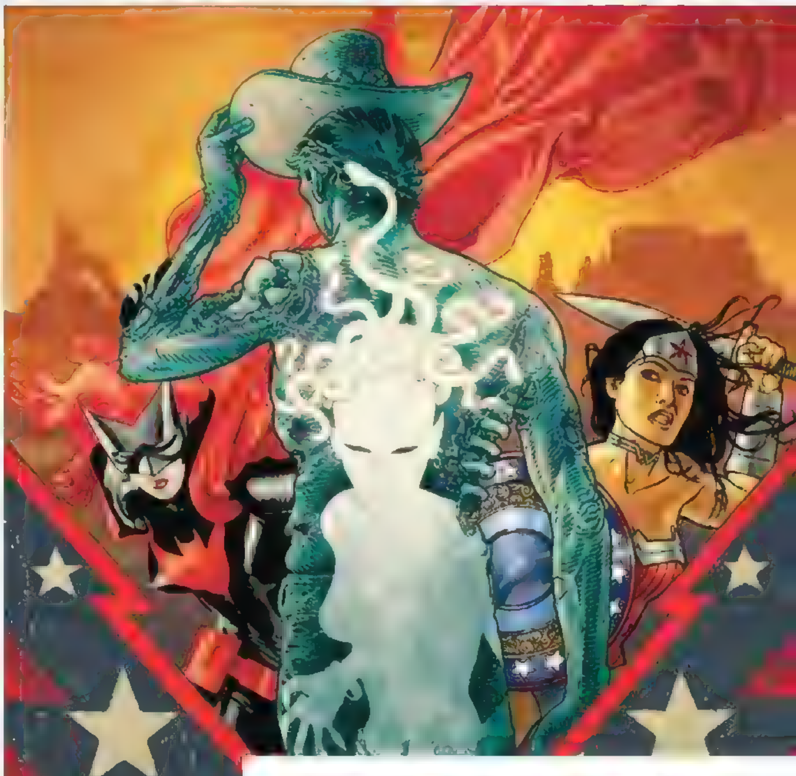
This Issue's Highlights

98 DC Round-Up
100 Marvel Round-Up
105 Betty & Veronica
106 Nobrow Round-Up
107 EC Round-Up
110 SelfMadeHero

COMIC HEROES REVIEWS SPONSORED BY
ComicDomain.co.uk
Your online comic shop



Has the Super-family met its match?



Batwoman chases down Medusa.

An all-girl team-up.

DC ROUND-UP

First anniversary celebrations over, what now for the New 52?

BATMAN
WRITER: Scott Snyder
ARTIST: Greg Capullo
OUT: Now
★★★★★

SUPERGIRL
WRITER: Mike Johnson
ARTIST: Mahmud Asrar
OUT: Now
★★★½

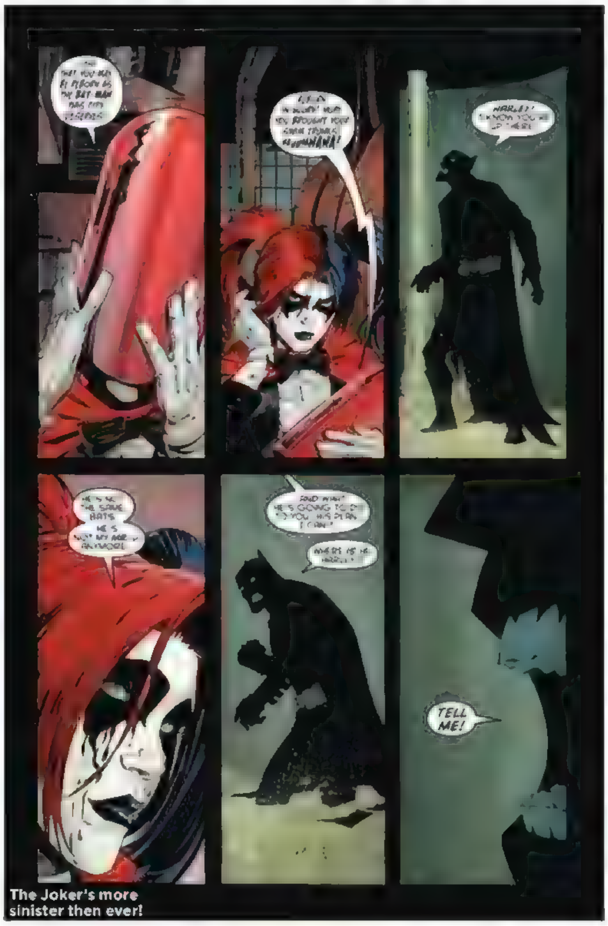
JUSTICE LEAGUE DARK
WRITER: Jeff Lemire
ARTIST: Graham Nolan
OUT: Now
★★★★

BATWOMAN
WRITERS: JH Williams III and W Haden Blackman
ARTIST: JH Williams III
OUT: Now
★★★★★

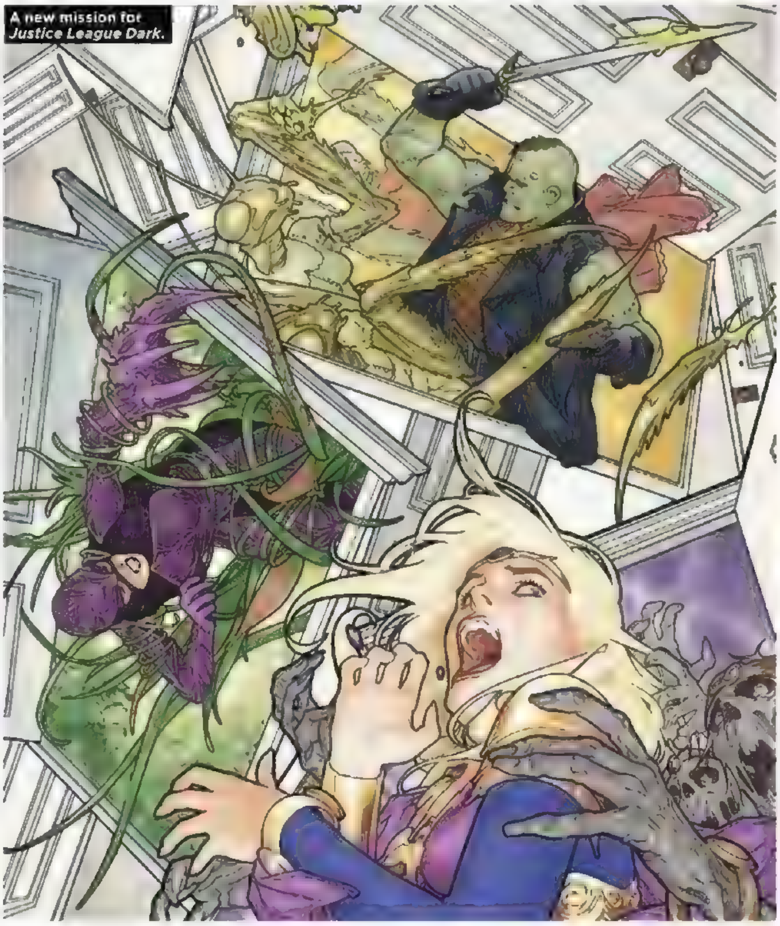
The New 52 initiative is now just over a year old, its first anniversary having been marked by a slew of flashback #0 issues, a smattering of annuals, and a Third Wave of new title launches. So what next? Well, crossovers seem to be the order of the day. Just finishing is the *Hawkman* saga 'Hawkman: Wanted', which sees Katar Hol framed for the murder of his adoptive brother.

The 'Rotworld' storyline continues to insinuate its putrescent tendrils through the weirder, danker corners of the DCU, affecting (infecting?) *Swamp Thing, Animal Man* and *Frankenstein: Agent Of SHADE*, and 'Rise Of The Third Army' spills busily across all of the Green Lantern books. Meanwhile, royal undersea turmoil is bubbling up for Aquaman in 'Throne Of Atlantis'.

First and foremost, however, are 'Death Of The Family' and 'H'el On Earth'. The former threads through most of the Bat-family books as well as *Suicide Squad* and *Teen Titans*, and sees the Joker return after an absence of several months. When the Clown Prince of Crime last appeared, he had just persuaded the Dollmaker to slice his face off and left it pinned to the wall of his cell in Arkham. Having lain low plotting against Batman and allies, Joker now liberates his fizzog from the Gotham PD archives and staples it back in place. This leaves him looking more grotesque and deranged than ever. It all kicks off in *Batman* #13, and Scott Snyder and Greg Capullo do a fantastic job setting up just how dire this new threat is. On a dark and stormy night, Joker makes a mockery of Gotham's finest, leaving Commissioner Gordon surrounded by dead uniformed cops. Then the taunting and the



The Joker's more sinister then ever!



A new mission for *Justice League Dark*.

> “ *Batwoman* is the most beautifully illustrated comic on the stands today ”

cat-and-mouse games begin, culminating in a truly chilling last-page splash-panel cliffhanger. Things take a turn for the worse in #14, with Gordon poisoned and Alfred abducted.

'Death Of The Family' promises to be one of the best Bat-series in a long time, confirming Joker as the all-time great comic book villain.

KRYPTON FACTOR

'H'el On Earth' is a less sprawling affair, impinging on fewer titles, but the stakes are as high if not higher. A Kryptonian super-being comes to Earth and establishes contact with all other Kryptonian survivors, starting with the Superboy clone and moving on to Supergirl and then Big Blue himself. H'el has scarred grey skin and a backwards S-symbol carved into his chest, lending him a superficial similarity to Bizarro, although him not talk funny or do things in opposite.

Actually, H'el is quite an intelligent, articulate fellow. As we learn in *Supergirl* #14, Jor-El, H'el's mentor, dispatched him off into space in order to safeguard Krypton's accumulated knowledge and culture. H'el wants to recruit Kara Zor-El's help to resurrect that now-destroyed planet, even if our homeworld will somehow have to pay the price. Mike Johnson's script in this issue makes much of Supergirl's still-evolving comprehension of the ways of Earth people and her awkwardness among us. Unlike her cousin Kal-El, she's having trouble fitting in, so H'el's seductive spiel has a real allure for her.

'H'el On Earth' is an enjoyable Super-romp, showing great promise. H'el's character and motivation remain a little fuzzy, but he has that tortured nobility common to many of the best baddies (Namor and Dr Doom).

MONSTERS' BALL

Down in the eldritch shadows of the DCU, *Justice League Dark* is showing that monsters, too, can have a ball. The team are dealing with the fallout from their battle with Nick Necro and Felix Faust, and also trying to track down Timothy Hunter and Zatanna, who have disappeared through a portal opened by the Books of Magic. Frankenstein, Amethyst and Black Orchid get lost inside the House of Mystery, where a few very cryptic hints are dropped about the future of several major superheroes.

Batwoman
12

Finally, Batwoman is having her own mini-crossover, in as much as Wonder Woman is currently guest-starring in her title in a storyline called, cheekily, 'World's Finest'. The two ladies are pursuing the Gorgon Medusa, who has escaped to wreak havoc, including reviving the mythical monster, the Hydra.

Let there be no doubt that *Batwoman* is the most beautifully illustrated comic on the stands today, and happily the scripts match the visuals. The interaction between Batwoman and Wonder Woman is spot-on, each finding much to admire in the other. Wonder Woman admits to fearing that she 'will never have half the courage of this Batwoman', while Batwoman quietly freaks out about piloting her Bat-submarine with an honest-to-goodness demigoddess riding shotgun beside her.

Batwoman is the jewel in the New 52 crown and the superhero comic all other superhero comics want to be when they grow up.
James Lovegrove

MARK WAID
MARVEL NOW!
LEINIL YU
INDESTRUCTIBLE
HULK #1
JOIN THE
R EVOLUTION
FREE

It's an all-action start to *Iron Man*.

All-New X-Men strike a pose.

MARVEL ROUND-UP

ALL NEW X-MEN
WRITER: Brian Michael Bendis
ARTISTS: Stuart Immonen and Wade Von Grawbadger
OUT: Now
★★★★

IRON MAN
WRITER: Kieron Gillen
ARTISTS: Greg Land and Jay Leisten
OUT: Now
★★★★

UNCANNY AVENGERS
WRITER: Rick Remender
ARTIST: John Cassaday
OUT: Now
★★★★

INDESTRUCTIBLE HULK
WRITER: Mark Waid
ARTIST: Leinil Yu
OUT: Now
★★★★

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
WRITER: Dan Slott
ARTIST: Richard Elson
OUT: Now
★★★★

A reborn Red Skull is wreaking havoc.

Strong starts for all the big guns, but it's Hulk that really smashes it...

When it was first announced that the majority of the House of Ideas' flagship titles would be changing direction in the devastating aftermath of *Avengers Vs X-Men*, the much-trumpeted advent of Marvel Now! seemed easy to dismiss for the cynics. Surely this suspiciously familiar line-wide rejig was nothing more than a pale imitation of DC's successful initiative, the New 52?

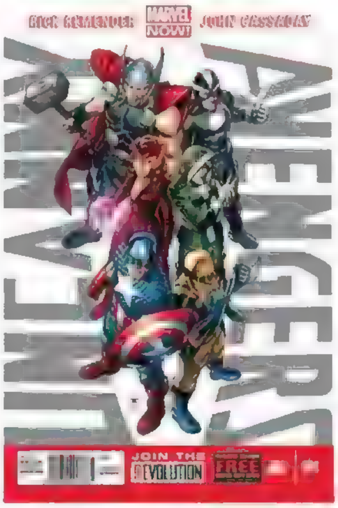
Slowly, however, further details filtered out, and it became clear that this was something different, and not actually a radical reinvention in the fashion of DC's back-to-basics approach at all. Indeed, as Marvel Now!'s first monthly offerings have proved, the company's decades of convoluted continuity remains largely intact. Instead, think of this more as a fresh chapter, a new volume, designed as a perfect jumping on point for new readers, but one which shouldn't also alienate hardcore fans. Indeed, the biggest changes here all involve creative teams rather than characters, as leading scribes like Matt Fraction, Jason Aaron and Jonathan Hickman have wrapped up their acclaimed, long-running tenures on books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* to explore pastures new.

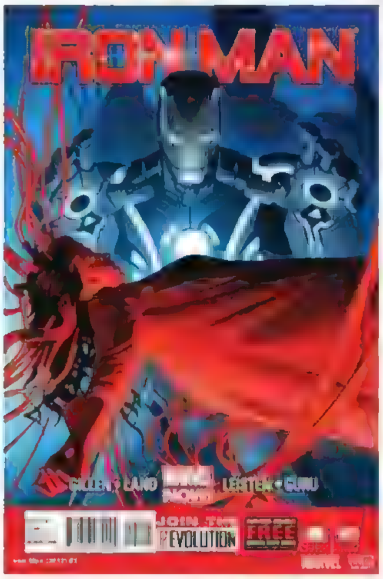
One headline, surely, is that after concluding his near-decade long, 232-issue tenure on various Avengers titles, Brian Michael Bendis is away, jumping across town to take charge of Marvel's other sun, the X-Men family of mutant-orientated books. Alongside his erstwhile *Ultimate Spider-Man* partner Stuart Immonen, Bendis is helming the slightly erroneously titled *All-New X-Men* – which actually sees Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's original gang of Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Angel, Iceman and Beast fetching up in the present day after being plucked from a pivotal moment in their history by an ailing Beast.

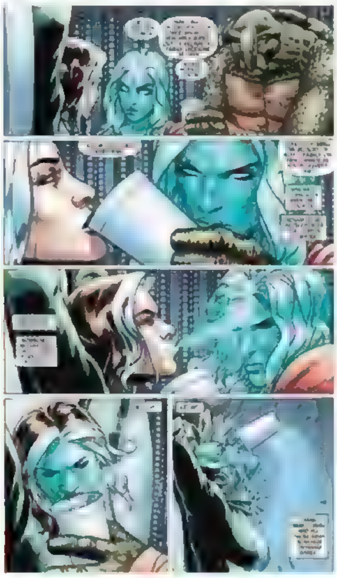
Bendis draws some intriguing links between the current, almost post-apocalyptic X-Universe – as the former Phoenix Five, lead by an increasingly fanatical Cyclops, leave a trail of destruction in their wake as they seek out the world's burgeoning new mutants like a latter-day Brotherhood of New Mutants – and its turbulent, but more innocent past. Set against a backdrop of the Civil Rights movement, the young X-Men question Professor Xavier's peaceful philosophies after being threatened by human lynch mobs. Supported by Stuart Immonen and Wade Von Grawbadger's dynamic, fluid cartooning, Bendis seems to be building an X-epic here that could eventually stand head-to-head with Claremont, Byrne and Austin's halcyon '70s tales. Get in on the ground floor while you can.

SHINING KNIGHT

After the considerable hoopla last year about Kieron Gillen becoming only the second writer to ever pen an *Uncanny X-Men* #1 – Bendis will become the third when it returns for a third volume in February, that second being a total flash-in-the-pan – it's a tad disappointing to see him exit the book merely 12 months later. But on the positive side, he has accepted the daunting







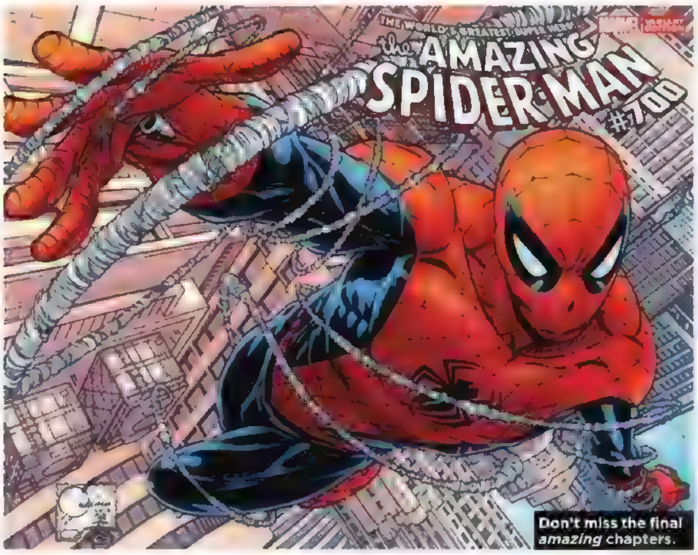
Wiley Wanda: she'll cast a spell on you.

"When Hulk get hurt, Hulk get mad!"

task of succeeding Matt Fraction on the now-adjectiveless *Iron Man*. Smartly spinning out of Warren Ellis' classic 'Extremis' arc – which features in next year's *Iron Man 3* big screen extravaganza – Gillen hits the ground running as the DNA-modifying cybernetic virus is lost to the black market after its creator Maya Hansen is quickly dispatched in #1's opening pages.

Repositioning Shellhead as the Grail Knight of the 21st century, the Arthurian legend is laid on a bit thick in #2, as the Armoured Avenger confronts Camelot-inspired assassins, the Circle, on what looks suspiciously like a *Thunderbirds*-esque Tracy Island. More importantly, Gillen seems to have got Tony Stark's Bruce Wayne-esque decadent playboy act off to a tee, right down to his seemingly ever-present beard. With this sleekly studious linework, Greg Land was born to draw Shellhead – and #1's opening shot of him hovering above the New York skyline is simply breathtaking.

Elsewhere, after kicking off Marvel Now! with record-breaking sales boosted by a plethora of variant covers in October, the much-delayed *Uncanny Avengers* has found itself overshadowed by the rest of Marvel's fresh crop. Still, after a couple of years absent from comic books, John Cassaday's return to the medium is heartily welcomed. Designed as a bridge book between the Children of the Atom and Earth's Mightiest Heroes, Rick Remender adds some newfound focus to the esoteric wackiness that has made his recently concluded *Uncanny X-Force* such a cult favourite.


THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
#700
Don't miss the final amazing chapters.

Beginning with Cap A entrusting Havok – younger brother of the disgraced Cyclops – with leading a combined team of X-Men and Avengers, Remender weaves an enthralling tale that centres around a fanatical Red Skull stealing the late Professor X's brain.

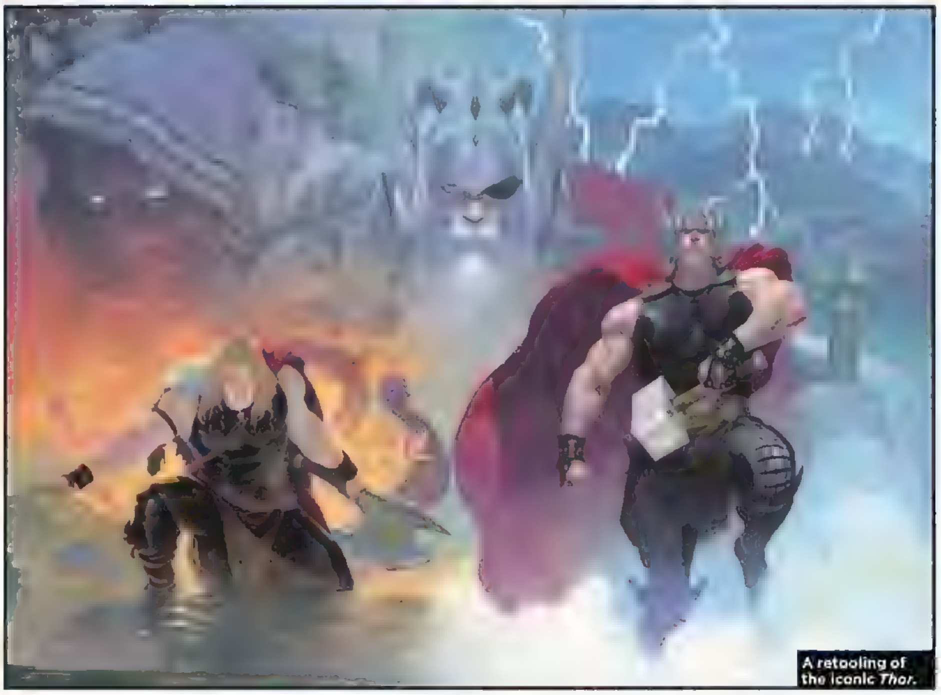
EMERALD DAWN

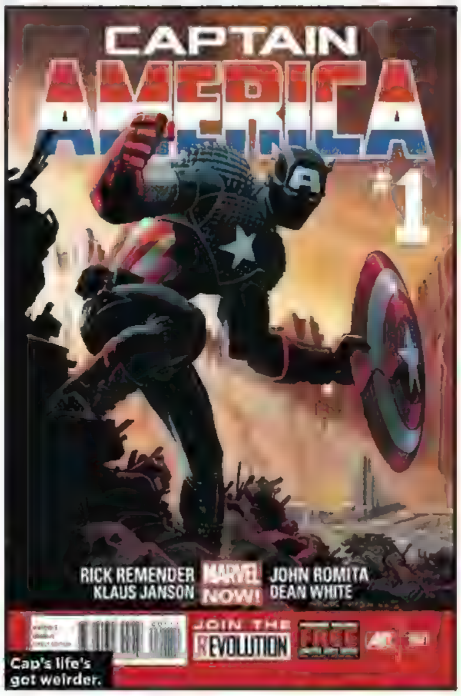
The unexpected hit of Marvel Now! has been *Indestructible Hulk*, but with Mark Waid at the helm that's not really that much of a surprise. Bringing the excellent form that has won him much acclaim (and an Eisner!) for his superlative-defying *Daredevil* stint, the veteran scribe appears to be at the top of his game. While the brilliantly simple high concept of the Hulk has been diluted in recent years by the emergence of the likes of Skaar: Son of Hulk, Red Hulk and Red She-Hulk, Waid wisely places the emphasis back on the symbiotic relationship between Bruce Banner and his emerald alter ego.

Beginning with a deftly handled conversation between Banner and S.H.I.E.L.D. director Maria Hill in an Alabama diner, there are shades of Mark Ruffalo's subtly nuanced Avengers performance here, as Bruce makes Maria an offer that she can't refuse. After the subtle cartooning of the likes of Chris Samnee and Marcos Martin on *Daredevil*, Waid is evidently enjoying the opportunity to cut loose in a different fashion here, as he's partnered with the ever-bombastic Leinil Yu.

So what's next? Well, Marvel's famed wall-crawler doesn't officially join the ranks of Marvel Now! books until January, when *Superior Spider-Man* makes its bow, but after #698's sensational revelation, irregular readers are fervently advised to get on-board for the last few issues of the outgoing *Amazing Spider-Man*'s historic run.

Far be it from *Comic Heroes* to reveal the exact nature of Dan Slott's ingenious sleight of hand, but suffice to say that any re-reading of the preceding 20 pages – indeed, the last two years of Slott's excellent run – will ensure that you see what happens in a very different light. Superhero stories don't come much better than this. Excelsior! **Stephen Jewell**


A retooling of the iconic *Thor*.


CAPTAIN AMERICA
#1
RICK REMENDER
KLAUS JANSON
MARVEL NOW!
JOHN ROMITA
DEAN WHITE
JOIN THE REVOLUTION
Cap's life's got weirder.

MARVEL EXTRA

More from Marvel Now!, the latest semi-reboot of the biggest line in comics...

FANTASTIC FOUR

WRITER: Matt Fraction
ARTISTS: Mark Bagley & Mark Farmer
OUT: Now
★★★½☆

FF

WRITER: Matt Fraction
ARTIST: Michael Allred
OUT: Now
★★★★☆

CAPTAIN AMERICA

WRITER: Rick Remender
ARTISTS: John Romita Jr, Klaus Janson
OUT: Now
★★★☆

THOR

WRITER: Jason Aaron
ARTIST: Esad Ribic
OUT: Now
★★★

RED SHE-HULK

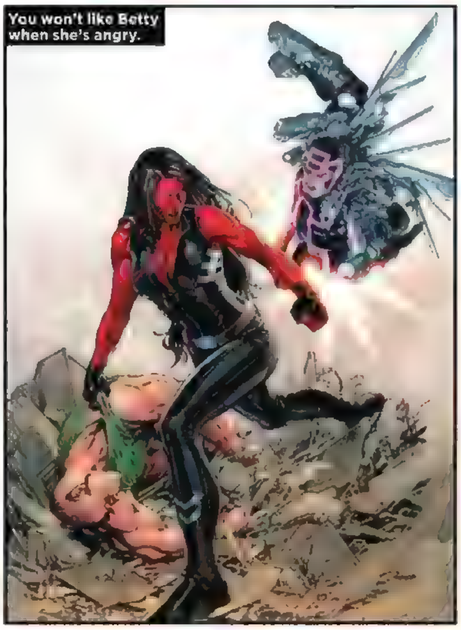
WRITER: Jeff Parker
ARTISTS: Carlo Pagulayan & Wellinton Alves
OUT: Now
★★½☆☆

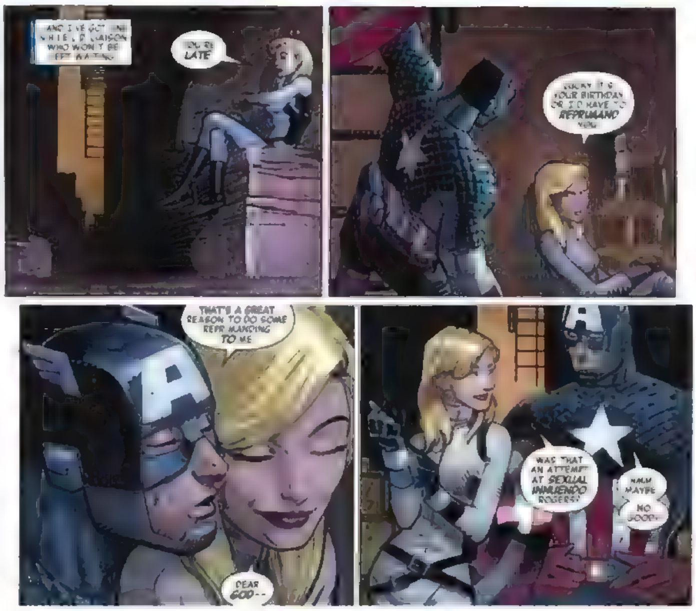
As more and more Marvel Now! books appear, the underlying themes of this new take on our heroes become increasingly clear: this is no total reinvention, but instead a heaped helping of jumping-on points, with new big-name creative teams taking familiar franchises in fresh directions. With everyone crossovered out following *AvX*, this is a chance for each book to re-establish itself as its own distinct entity, with its unique mood and artistic style, rather than just as a building block in some vast company-wide epic. It's hardly radical – more a return to the way things were – but it's a breath of fresh air nonetheless.

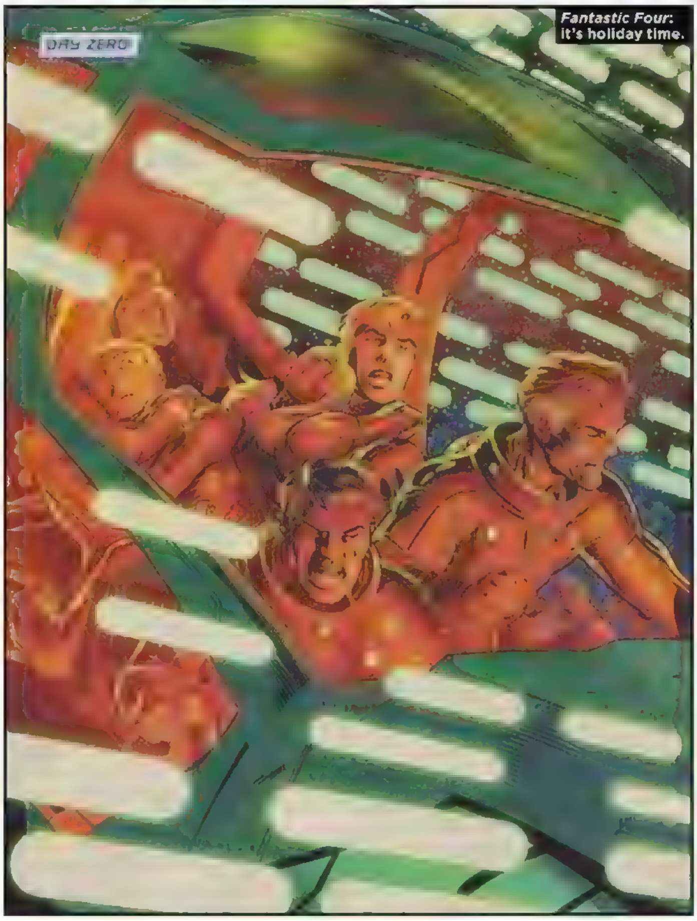
Other trends establish themselves too, notably something of an end to written-for-the-trades decompressed storytelling – hurrah for that! – allowing individual issues to stand on their own two feet, and each creator saying, "I can't hope to beat [whoever it was] at [whatever it was they did] on my book last year, so I'm going my own way instead."

Thus it is with Matt Fraction, who's kept all the toys established in Jonathan Hickman's epic run on the Fantastic Four family of books – notably the 'Future Foundation', the sun around which spin-off title *FF* orbits – but is doing his own thing with them.

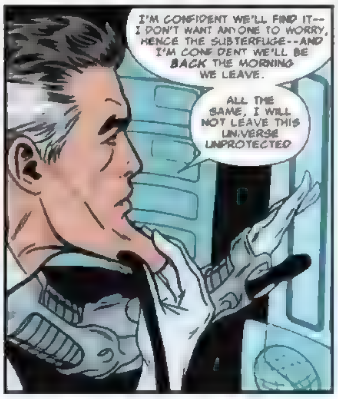
Taking the core team, all members re-established, off on a quest through time, space and other dimensions in a *The Authority*-style supership – they're in search of a cure to the mystery ailment that may be killing them and stripping them of their powers – he effectively removes Mr Fantastic et al from the Marvel Universe playing field. Now a bunch of make-weights must fill their shoes – established heroes like She-Hulk and Medusa, plus the lesser-known Scott Lang Ant-Man and total newbie Darla Deering, a pink-haired potential scene-stealer, casual girlfriend of the Human Torch in a borrowed Ben Grimm orange rock-suit.


You won't like Betty when she's angry.

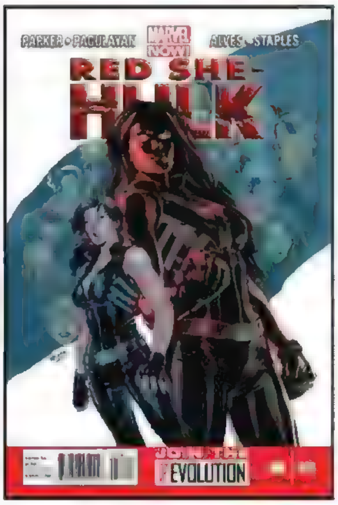

AND I'VE GOT ONE S.H.I.E.L.D. LIAISON WHO WON'T BE KEPT WAITING
YOU'RE LATE
LUCKY IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY OR I'D HAVE TO REPRIMAND YOU.
THAT'S A GREAT REASON TO DO SOME REPRIMANDING TO ME
DEAR GOD--
WAS THAT AN ATTEMPT AT SEXUAL INNUENDO ROGERS?
HMM MAYBE
NO GOOD--



Fantastic Four: it's holiday time.


I'M CONFIDENT WE'LL FIND IT-- I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO WORRY, HENCE THE SUBTERFUGE--AND I'M CONFIDENT WE'LL BE *BACK* THE MORNING WE LEAVE.
ALL THE SAME, I WILL NOT LEAVE THIS UNIVERSE UNPROTECTED

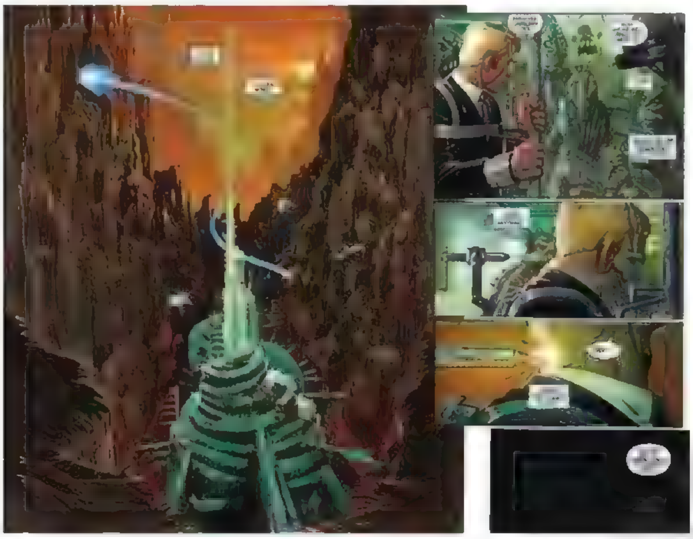
FF
#1
JOIN THE EVOLUTION



> **“This is a chance for each book to re-establish itself as its own distinct entity”**

Fraction is a clever, bouncy author, and writes for the strengths of his two artists – Mark Bagley (especially when inked, as here, by Mark Farmer) offering an Alan Davis-style superhero classics feel to the core *Fantastic Four* book, while Mike Allred's rock 'n' roll playfulness threatens to make *FF* (the one with Lang, Deering et al) everyone's favourite new title.

Also doing his own thing: Rick Remender on *Captain America*, who has dropped the spy-fi *SHIELD*-meets-*Homeland* feel of Ed Brubaker's just-finished run in favour of the most unexpected of influences: Jack Kirby's mad, energetic '70s take on Cap, where he wrote and drew surreal, fast-moving adventures packed with his crazy invention.



Thus, a few pages of character work – a mildly disappointing flashback to Steve Rogers' boyhood on Manhattan's Lower East Side, circa 1926, which would be perfectly fine if it didn't feel so much like cutting room floor material from some Frank Miller *Daredevil* comic, drunk abusive father and all – segues into an insane modern day action sequence, before a brief love scene with Sharon Carter, a subway tunnel mystery, and suddenly Cap is whisked to an alien world, an encounter with an old enemy, and into what appears to be a mission in another universe.

You can't complain not enough happens, and if some bits stretch credulity – who wouldn't hear a crashing eight-engined bomber just before it smashed into the sea? Where did Cap hide his shield? And just how strong is he, if he can snap steel manacles, anyway? – it's all the sort of madness that totally fits the Kirby vibe.

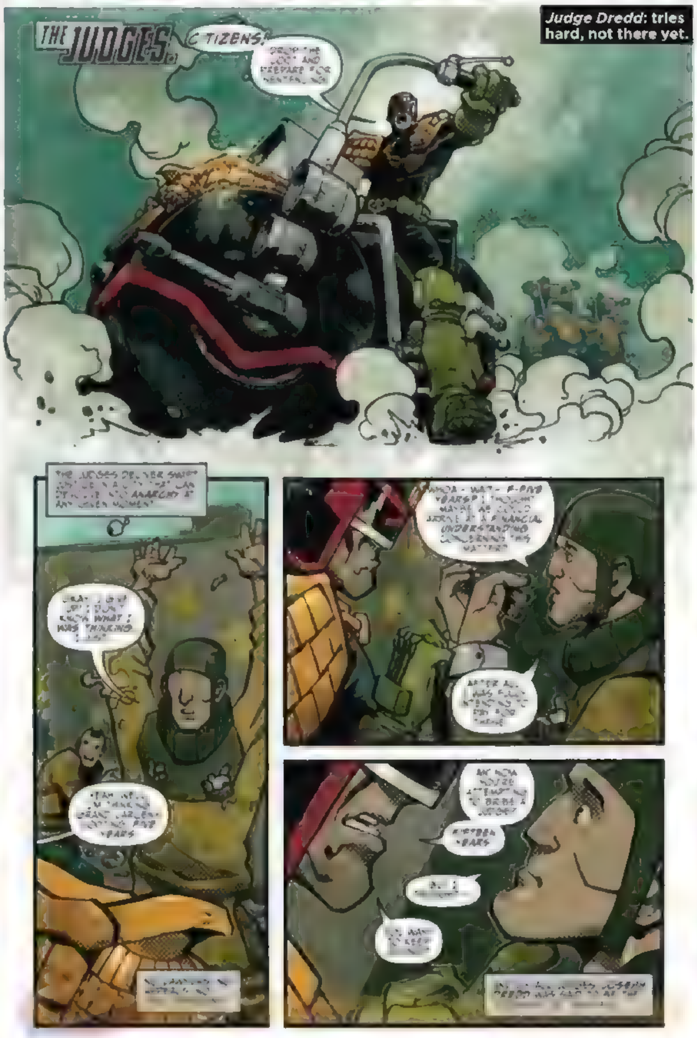
HAMMER TIME

Over on *Thor*, Jason Aaron enjoys the lush painted art of Esad Ribic and colourist Dean White to tell a tale of three thunder gods: a young, foolhardy one drinking and snagging with Vikings in Ireland; the present day model uncovering murdered gods in deep space; and an Odin-like Thor of the future holding the line against a final assault on Asgard. Though slightly slowed down by lots of voiceover in parts, at least it's nice to be able to complain about too much text, rather than too little, in a mainstream comic for a change – and, again, you can't complain that nothing happens. Another strong start.

SCARLET WOMAN

Not all of Marvel Now! is new #1s – as the titles above all are, of course – and some books with the label are just trudging on in their own fashion. One such is *Red She-Hulk*, which – though not bad – is the most old-fashioned feeling effort here, the entire book comprising just three scenes, two of which are mostly fights. The art is pretty much generic superhero here too, not helped by the fact that Betty Ross' gamma-powered incarnation boasts the most under-imagined costume in modern comics (basically, a black sleeveless jumpsuit), as do the no-name supersoldiers she tangles with here. It's fine; it's also a tiny bit ho-hum – and has a totally unnecessary rape threat element thrown in for no good reason.

Seems Marvel's very much on the right path with this Marvel Now! initiative, but some books are striding down it rather faster than others. **Paul Marland**


THE JUDGES
CITIZENS!
KI-YAH!

Judge Dredd: tries hard, not there yet.

JUDGE DREDD

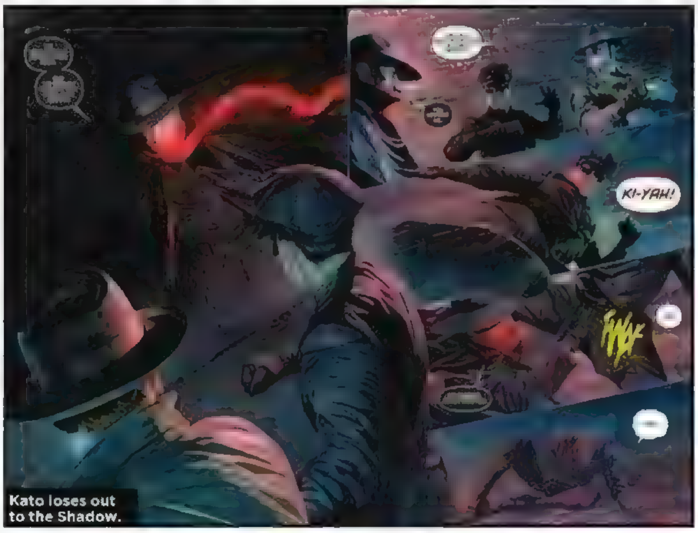
WRITER: Duane Swierczynski
ARTISTS: Nelson Daniel & Paul Gulacy
PUBLISHER: IDW
OUT: Now
★★½

Judge Dredd has had a funny old time outside his *2000 AD* home turf, and his time in American comics – '80s Eagle Comics reprints of the UK material, assorted ill-starred DC series a decade later – have failed to set the world alight, as admitted in a solid text piece in IDW's first *Judge Dredd* comic, featuring two introductory stories by US writer Duane Swierczynski, until now best known for his crime novels and a number of lesser Marvel titles, including a couple of years writing *Cable*.

It would be nice, then, to say this latest take is a triumph – but it ain't. Swierczynski struggles gamely to explain our 'hero' and his world, but both tales in #1 (a 16-page lead and a six-page back-up) lack interesting villains and struggle under an early weight of voiceover. This is 2100, early in Dredd's career if strict *2000 AD* continuity is being followed, and we seem to be building towards a take on the Robot Wars – Call-Me-Kenneth and all that. For now, though, it's just funny citizens and goofy future tech, uninterestingly rendered by the two artists here.

There's room for things to get better, for sure, but the results so far are a bit 'meh', and the deliberate refusal to do the one thing *2000 AD* can't – tell a single sweeping 22-page tale – seems almost wilfully dumb.

Paul Marland



Kato loses out to the Shadow.

MASKS

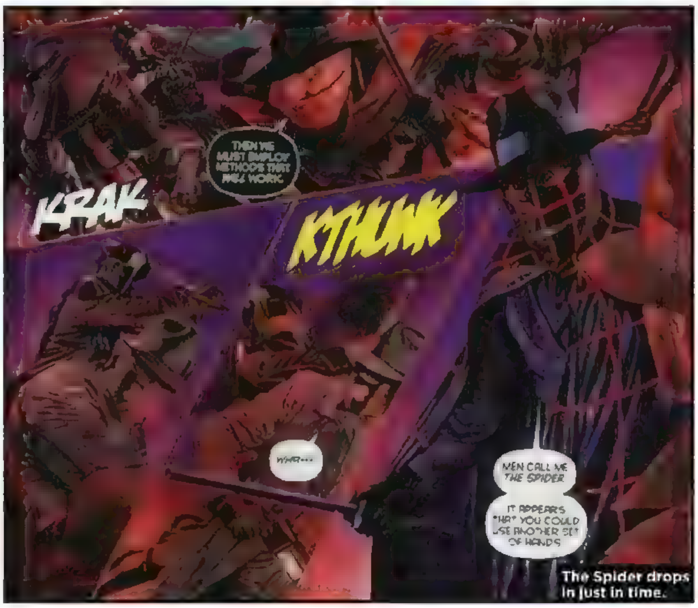
WRITER: Chris Roberson
ARTIST: Alex Ross
OUT: Now
★★★½

Well, there's no denying that the comic industry sure does love its big event crossovers – and so do we, until we realise quite how much money we're dropping on the damn things. So Dynamite's version – a self-contained old-school team-up, mixing its borrowed-from-elsewhere pulp-style heroes in one big adventure for the first time – has an undeniable freshness to it, not least because it ain't going to cost too much of a fortune to follow. Plus: it revels in fully-painted interior artwork by Alex (*Marvels*, *Kingdom Come*) Ross, making it amongst the most handsome comics we've seen in quite some time.

It's '30s New York, and a fascist terror state is marching into town – masked, Judge Dredd-like street cops, draconian laws against vagrancy and instant street-taxes on the populace – forcing a number of outside-the-law adventurers to team up as a rebel alliance in opposition. The Green Hornet and Kato dominate the start, the Spider rocks up at the end, but it's hard to see this not turning into the Shadow-and-friends, as the big-nosed, intensity factory that is Lamont Cranston scene-steals shamelessly whenever he appears.

A very solid start – and there are the likes of Ms Fury and even, perhaps, Zorro to come, as well as plenty more to learn, we're sure, about the nefarious, Nazi-esque Justice Party. Colour us intrigued.

Paul Marland


THEN WE MUST EMPLOY METHODS THAT WILL WORK.
KRAK
KTHUNK
WHAT--
MEN CALL ME THE SPIDER
IT APPEARS THAT YOU COULD USE ANOTHER SET OF HANDS

The Spider drops in just in time.

THE ART OF BETTY & VERONICA

EDITED BY: Victor Gorelick & Craig Yoe

PUBLISHER: Archie Books

OUT: Now

★★★☆☆

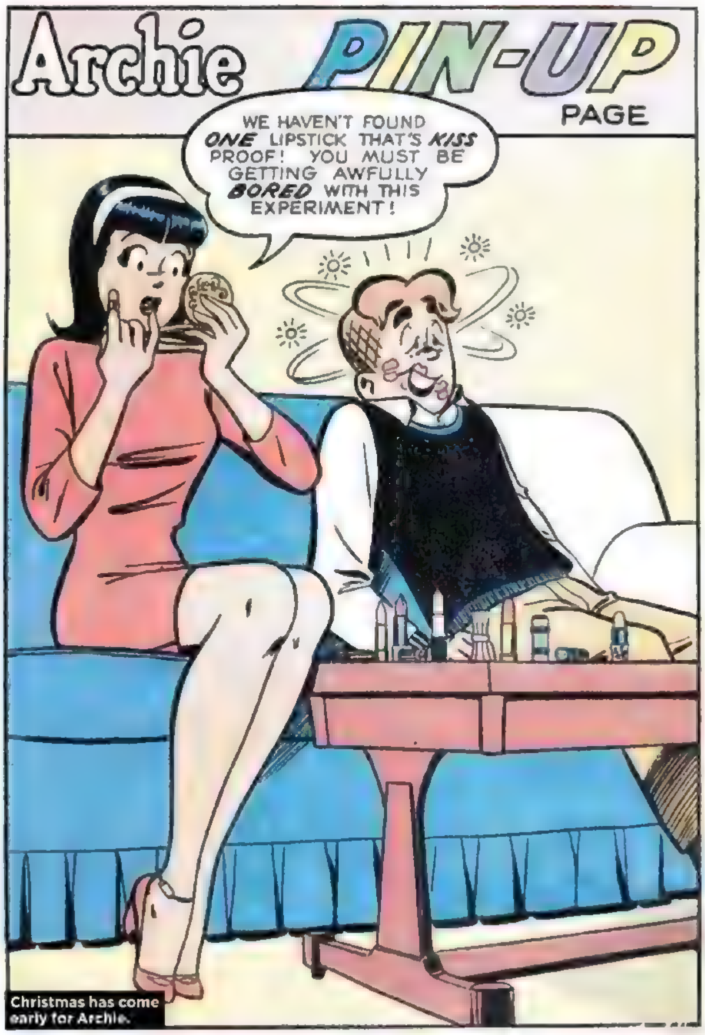
Archie Comics – that US institution full of *Happy Days*-like tales of cheery American teens running largely unchanged, the fashions and some hot props aside, since 1941 – are something of a mystery to most UK audiences, but they have an undeniable, if slightly sappy, charm.

Two of the series' biggest stars are Betty Cooper, happy-go-lucky blonde next door, and Veronica Lodge, her richer, vampier friend. The two girls are pals, but they constantly clash in their – frankly inexplicable – love for the very ordinary, ginger-haired Archie Andrews, series star and their accident-prone classmate. (If it all seems very Peter/Gwen/MJ, then we suspect this may be where Stan Lee nicked much of that love triangle from.)

This handsome *Art Of...* book is full of hilariously period art and sample strips, as well as less-than-convincing explanations as to why B and V aren't just the same girl with different coloured hair (Betty has a rounder chin and slightly shorter legs, apparently).

Highlights include the fashion pages – Hair Styles of the Future is a particular hoot – and some of the covers and single-page gags; inevitably the smooth and saccharin efforts of the past 10 years fall the most flat.

Very much a corporate effort, you'll search long and hard for dirt – or even the hint of a naysaying word – but damn, it's a ton of fun. **Matt Bielby**


Archie PIN-UP PAGE
WE HAVEN'T FOUND ONE LIPSTICK THAT'S KISS PROOF! YOU MUST BE GETTING AWFULLY BORED WITH THIS EXPERIMENT!

Christmas has come early for Archie.

COMIC HEROES

NEXT ISSUE

Future shocks!

WE'VE GONE CRAZY FOR FUTURE TECH

Iron Man
Inside the new series with Gillen & co! (Also: the next film!)

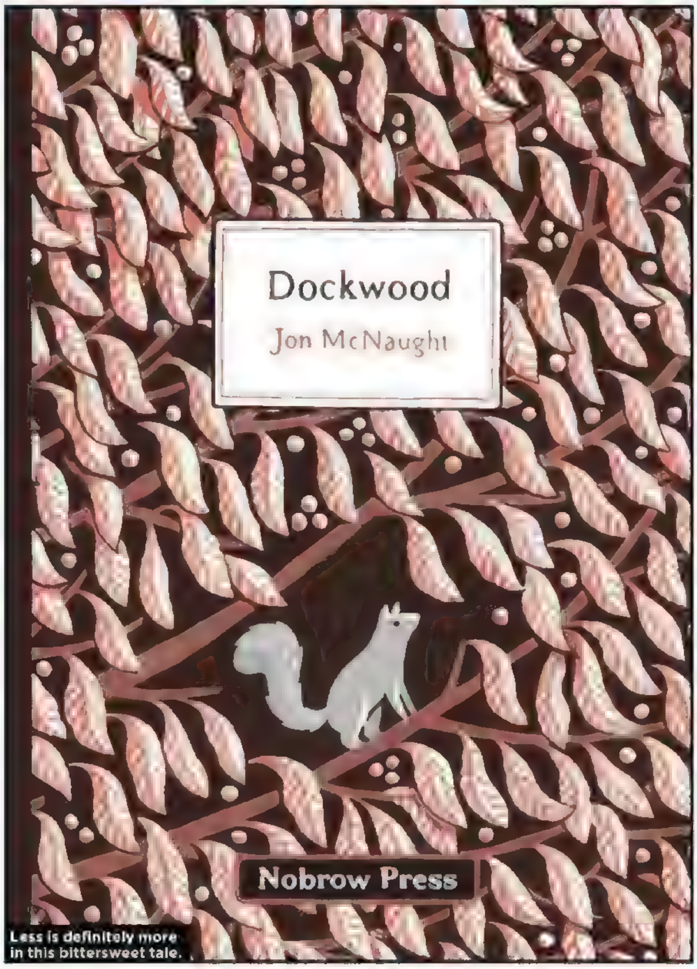
PLUS! The Vision! Machine Man! Cyborg! Ms Thing! Hammerstein!

AND! An epic interview with Roy Thomas on Marvel's make-or-break years!

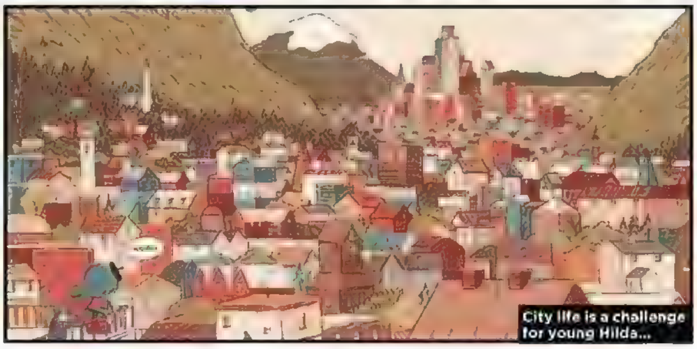
Not forgetting: Helicarriers! Cosmic Cubes! Boom Tubes! Adamantium! Mother Box! Lawgivers! Biochips! More!

Look out for the teleporting, Bleed-cruising, universe-threatening majesty that is Comic Heroes #17, on sale 20 February

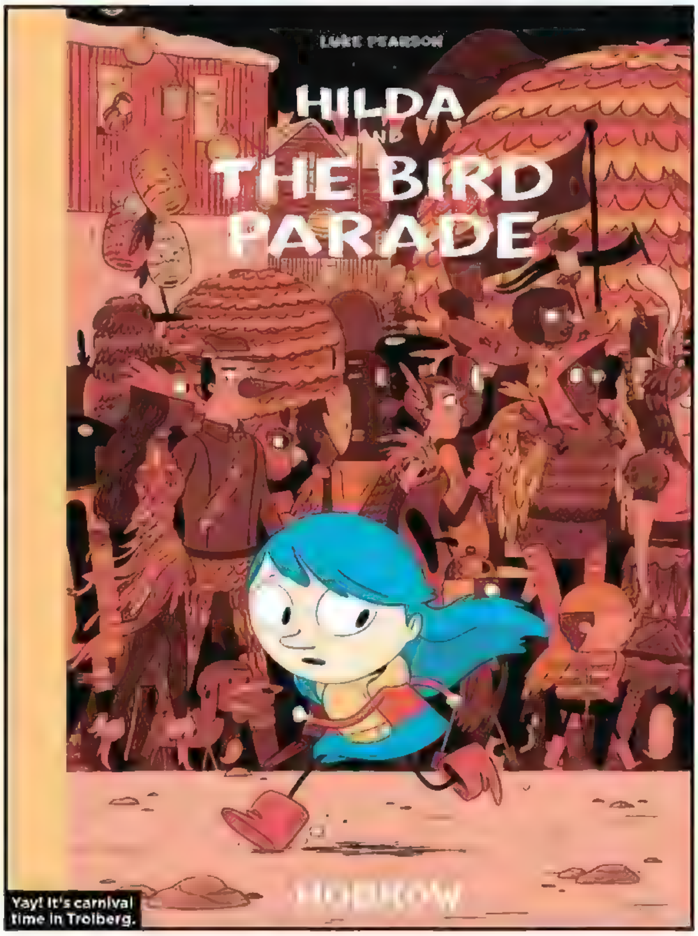
www.comicheroesmagazine.com
www.facebook.com/comicheroes
twitter.com/comicheroesmag



Less is definitely more in this bittersweet tale.



City life is a challenge for young Hilda...



Yay! It's carnival time in Trolberg.

NOBROW ROUND-UP

Beautiful albums from the English regions to haunt your dreams

HILDA AND THE BIRD PARADE
WRITER/ARTIST: Luke Pearson
OUT: Now
★★★★½

DOCKWOOD
WRITER/ARTIST: Jon McNaught
OUT: Now
★★★★½

You may never have come across Nobrow before, but you should; for four years or so now it's been producing high-end books of illustration, graphic art and comics from an eclectic mix of creators – every time we pick one up we think, 'I've never heard of this guy, but why the hell not?'

Two of the bigger names on Nobrow's books are Luke Pearson and Bristol's Jon McNaught. Pearson is from Nottingham, but produces lovely Scandinavian-themed children's stories – it's hard to talk about him without referencing Tove Jansson, creator of the Moomins – with clean, cartoony lines and distinctive, just-so colour palates. Though there's danger here, and magic, his heroine – a blue-haired little girl called Hilda, freshly moved from the fjords to the city – lives in an essentially benign world, where the Danish concept of hygge (cosy relaxing with loved ones) is never far from the surface.

Hilda has previously appeared in adventures like *Hildafolk* and *Hilda And The Midnight Giant*; here she meets new schoolmates (disappointingly mean), gets involved in a huge, bird-based street carnival, and rescues an injured, talking raven (totally the star of the show) before encounters with trolls, rat-kings, 'salt lions' and more.

It's whimsical but never twee, with a plucky, not-particularly-pretty heroine; as both intriguing children's story and adult-friendly art book it fires on all cylinders.

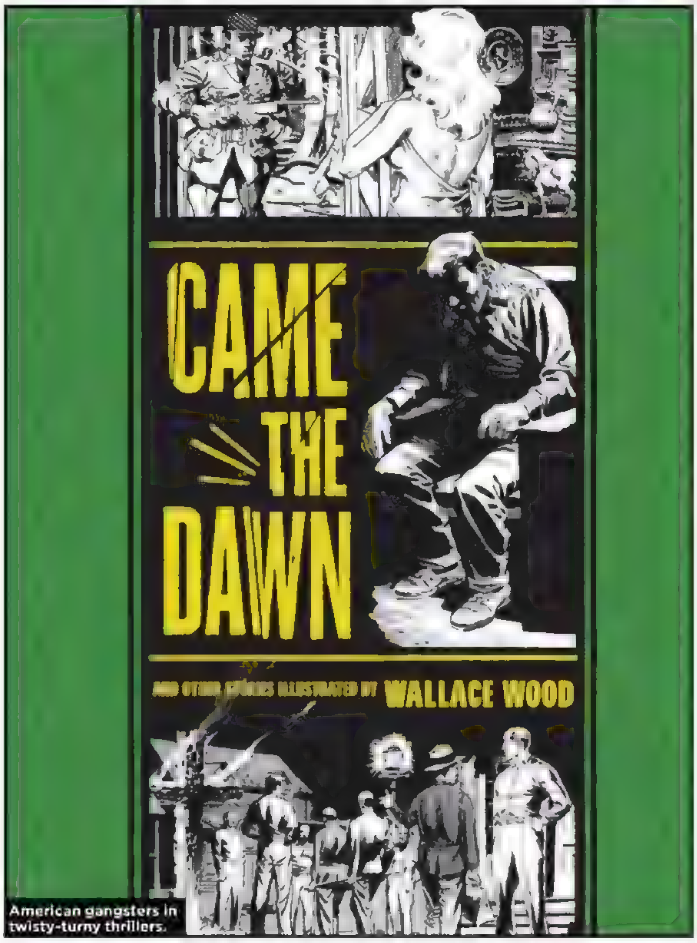
AUTUMN LEAVES

Jon McNaught's *Dockwood*, meanwhile, boasts some of the most atmospheric artwork we've seen in quite a while, slick slice-of-life stuff built up, mostly, of a huge number of tiny little panels – you see 20 on a page and think blimey, then you turn over and there are 28 there, usually uniform size little squares in the most limited of colour palates, mostly rusty pinks and bluey-greens.

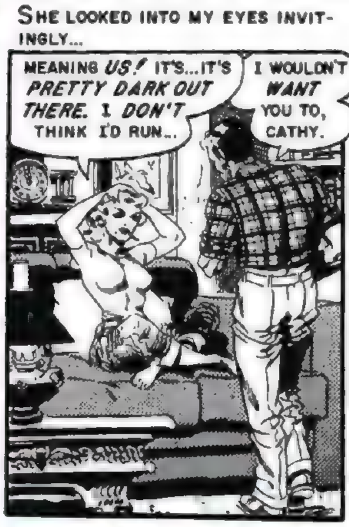
Subtitled '2 Autumn Stories', this volume is divided into a pair of mood pieces, both set in a modern southern English town where there are fallen leaves everywhere, squirrels and birds abound, and whole multi-page sequences will show the preparation of a single meal, the only dialogue the odd 'there ya go' and 'this okay?'

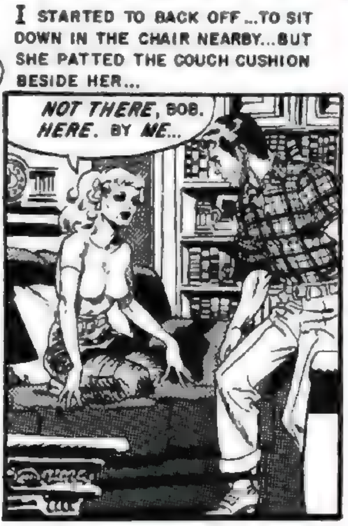
The bigger world intrudes via the odd BBC TV announcement, while the last pages detail a space adventure – a change of pace you'd think, except it is, of course, just a character settling down to play a videogame.

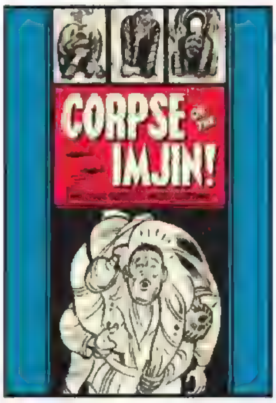
Chris Ware of *Jimmy Corrigan* fame is a fan of McNaught, and you can see why; people and animals pootle along with their everyday lives, and both nothing seems to matter and everything does – these are small moments, simple pleasures, and despite the bittersweet tone, the joy of living is palpable. **Matt Bielby**


CAME THE DAWN
AND OTHER STORIES ILLUSTRATED BY WALLACE WOOD

American gangsters in twisty-turny thrillers.


SHE LOOKED INTO MY EYES INVITINGLY...
MEANING US! IT'S...IT'S PRETTY DARK OUT THERE. I DON'T THINK I'D RUN...
I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO, CATHY.


I STARTED TO BACK OFF...TO SIT DOWN IN THE CHAIR NEARBY...BUT SHE PATTED THE COUCH CUSHION BESIDE HER...
NOT THERE, BOB. HERE. BY ME...


CORPSE ON THE IMJIN!

CAME the DAWN!

EC ROUND-UP

True classics of the medium, from the colossus of '50s comic books...

CORPSE ON THE IMJIN!
WRITER: Harvey Kurtzman
ARTISTS: Harvey Kurtzman and others
PUBLISHER: Fantagraphics
OUT: Now
★★★★★

CAME THE DAWN
WRITERS: Al Feldstein and others
ARTIST: Wallace Wood
PUBLISHER: Fantagraphics
OUT: Now
★★★★

Amongst the many good works done by Fantagraphics are its reprints of some of the true classics of comic book history, including these two instalments of The EC Library imprint, containing classic works from a couple of that celebrated publisher's greatest creators. War story artist/writer/editor Harvey Kurtzman is also known for the creation of *Mad* magazine and *Playboy*'s *Little Annie Fanny*, of course, but here he contributes to books like *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales*. And Wallace 'Wally' Wood, celebrated by Marvel fans for his design of the classic Daredevil costume, in this book tells sex-and-violence-heavy noir tales of crime and horror, originally printed in titles such as *Weird Science* and *Valor*.

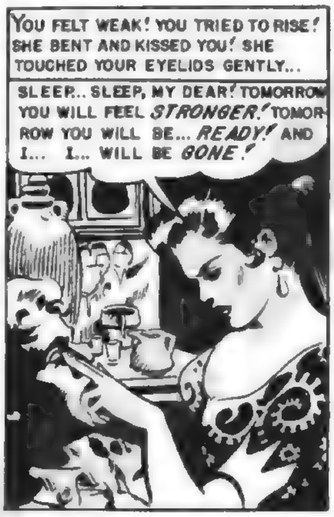
Both volumes are handsome, 240-page black-and-white beasts, the well-selected strips accompanied by a selection of assorted essays and notes. EC's glory days were from 1950-55, when censorship castrated them, and they specialised in punchy little genre tales: not just the horror they're best known for – though the Wood collection has plenty of that – but crime, suspense, war and others too.

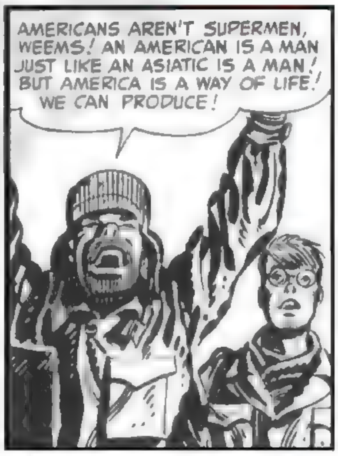
Though Wood is perhaps best known for his science fiction work, his lush brush line, moody shadows and crazy attention to detail service these tales of mobsters, beautiful chicks and desperate men in urban small-town America just as well. There are werewolves here and machine gun massacres, sweating brows and tragic cases of mistaken identity; and, as many of the protagonists find, Wood's dames are to die for.

Meanwhile, in the Kurtzman volume, we're in gritty war-is-hell land – strong stuff, whether he illustrated the tales himself (about half this volume) or got other period stars (Jack Davis, Alex Toth, Joe Kubert) to do it for him.

Kurtzman's own work is cartoony but utterly stone-faced and unflinching, and covers more than just the usual WW2 territory: we get 18th century pirates, Spanish conquistadors and the like too, as well as some of the punchiest story titles ever written: 'Air Burst!', 'Rubble!', 'Kill!'

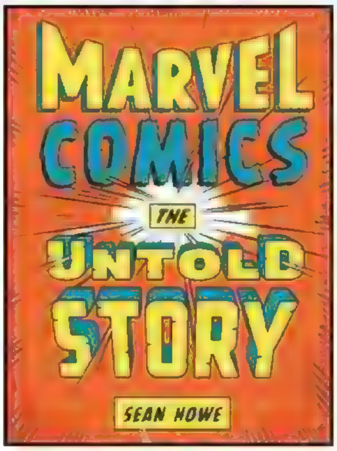
It's exhausting, tear-jerking stuff, with certain panels powerful enough to burn their way onto your retina. Just amazing work. **Matt Bielby**

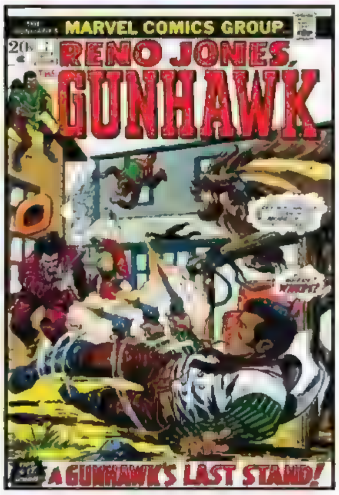

YOU FELT WEAK! YOU TRIED TO RISE! SHE BENT AND KISSED YOU! SHE TOUCHED YOUR EYELIDS GENTLY...
SLEEP... SLEEP, MY DEAR! TOMORROW YOU WILL FEEL STRONGER! TOMORROW YOU WILL BE... READY! AND I... I... WILL BE GONE!


AMERICANS AREN'T SUPERMEN, WEEMS! AN AMERICAN IS A MAN JUST LIKE AN ASIATIC IS A MAN! BUT AMERICA IS A WAY OF LIFE! WE CAN PRODUCE!

NOW JUST STAY WHERE YOU ARE, MY HAPLESS HERO!
MY LITTLE FLYING BAT MISSILE WILL PUT AN END TO ALL YOUR PETTY CARES AND WOES-- FOREVER!
HIS MISSILE'S JET-PROPELLED! MY TIMING HAS TO BE PERFECT!
NOW!
AHH, WELL DONE, PARKER! SEEING YOU DRESSED LIKE ANY AVERAGE YOUTH I TEND TO FORGET YOUR DAZZLING SPIDER SPEED!
BUT ALAS, YOU HAVE ONLY WON YOURSELF A TEMPORARY MOMENT OF RESPITE--
WHIRRRRRRR!
HE'S DIVING CLOSE AGAIN!! NOW'S MY CHANCE--!
I'VE GOT TO GET HIM NOW. I'VE GOT TO! FOR THE SAKE OF AUNT MAY!
EVERY SECOND LONGER THAT WE FIGHT OUT HERE, BRINGS HER A MINUTE CLOSER TO DISCOVERING MY SECRET!
ALL RIGHT GOBLIN-- YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN-- AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GET IN A FEW LICKS!
SPOKEN WITH THE TRUE SPIRIT OF DERRING-DO, YOU BUMBLING YOUNG INCOMPETENT! A PITY THAT YOUR WORDS SHALL PROVE AS USELESS AS YOUR OVERRATED POWERS!

Behind the scenes it was just as brutal...


MARVEL COMICS
THE
UNTOLD
STORY
SEAN HOWE


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
20¢
RENO JONES,
THE GUNHAWK
A GUNHAWK'S LAST STAND!

MARVEL COMICS THE UNTOLD STORY

Marvel is home to many of comics' most enduring characters and potent creators, but the behind-the-scenes story is just as powerful...

WRITER: Sean Howe
PUBLISHER: HarperCollins
OUT: Now
★★★★½

Marvel Comics: The Untold Story* traces the trajectory of the company from the scrappy, can-do outsider outfit that rose from the ashes of Timely Comics to the globe-bestriding corporate colossus we know and (mostly) love today. It's a tale of inspired creativity, crushed dreams, volcanic ego clashes, wince-inducing ruthlessness, cheated freelancers and dastardly boardroom infighting, and Howe tells it with relish, delicacy and a great deal of insight.

What emerges most strongly from his narrative is how close Marvel has come to extinction during its 50-year lifespan, and how often. That the House of Ideas has survived countless industry implosions, economic downturns and predatory asset-stripping owners is down to two things: the constancy of its fans and the enduring power of its characters. Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, Hulk, Thor, Iron Man, et al, are such iconic creations that they've managed to transcend the sometimes-insane editorial regimes and seemingly suicidal business decisions that have threatened to consign them to oblivion. Their resilience is a superheroic feat equal to any desperate, last-ditch victory over Dr Doom or Galactus. Thanks to them and people's abiding love for them, Marvel has been brought back from death's door more times than Aunt May.

Through intensive background research and interviews with key figures in the real-life Marvel dramatis personae, Howe interweaves behind-the-scenes shenanigans with the evolving fictional tapestry of the Marvel universe, shedding light on both the private and public faces of the company. Some terrific anecdotes crop up along the way, the best of them taking place during the '70s when Marvel was at its most innovative and freewheeling. Back then, Jim Starlin's trippy, mind-expanding *Captain Marvel* was so popular with freaks and dopeheads that they would send him complimentary joints in the post, while *Defenders* and *Dr Strange* plotlines were brainstormed on acid-fuelled benders.

There are bittersweet moments as well – such as Stan Lee, in a rare fit of altruism, offering a low-paid proofreading position to impoverished *Superman* co-creator Jerry Siegel – and, of course, the thorny issue of creators' rights and ownership of characters rumbles on throughout the book, with particular emphasis on the harsh, high-handed treatment of Jack Kirby. Kirby, indeed, provides a quote that sums up the tragedy of every writer or artist who arrived at the Bullpen full of hope and ambition and left broken and dispirited, poorer in just about every way. "I see [Marvel] as a serpent's nest," said the King, darkly. "And in a serpent's nest, nothing can survive. Eventually all the snakes kill each other."

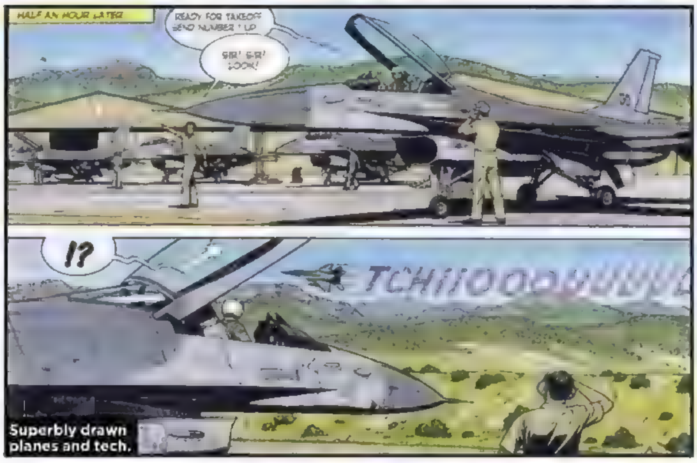
The slipperiest, most venomous of those snakes do not escape Howe's attention. Villains abound in these pages. Jim Shooter's autocratic and increasingly megalomaniacal reign in the late '70s, culminating in a leaked memo which may or may not have been authored by Shooter himself and which describes the toweringly tall editor-in-chief as 'like unto the Very God of the Marvel Universe', is calmly and mercilessly dissected. No less worthy of our boos and hisses are the sharp business practices of early-'90s Marvel chairman Ike Perlmutter, and his Machiavellian ousting of his then-boss Ron Perelman.

BOARDROOM BATTLES

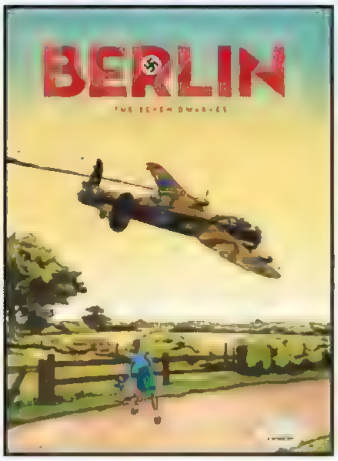
The passages that focus on this sort of financial wheeler dealing, and the various mergers and acquisitions that have afflicted late-period Marvel, do slow the pace somewhat. Although Howe explains the minutiae of complex stock transactions and courtroom battles well, there's just too much of this stuff and it's all a bit too depressingly seedy and cutthroat. His analysis of the comics themselves is, nonetheless, top-notch. He rightly identifies Steve Gerber's supporting characters as having 'crushingly low self-esteem', and neatly eviscerates the snarky, cocksure abomination that was Bill Jemas' *Marville* miniseries.

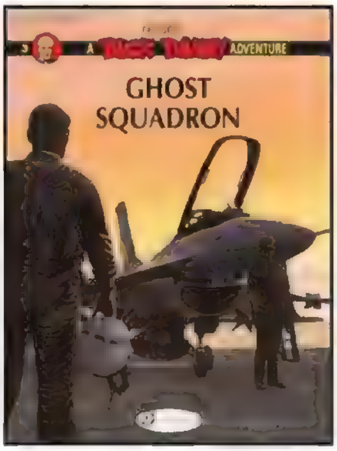
Some unlikely heroes come to the fore. Tom DeFalco may be a D-list comics writer, but during his tenure in the editor-in-chief's chair he stood up staunchly on behalf of his staff against executive interference, while Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, for all their spiv-like tendencies, pretty much saved Marvel when bankruptcy came close to destroying it in 1998.

Mighty Marvel marches merrily on, a leviathan glutted on the souls it has gobbled up and shat out over the past five decades. As a history of the company and its teetering highs and perilous lows, *The Untold Story* could hardly be bettered.
James Lovegrove



Superbly drawn planes and tech.





CINEBOOK ROUND-UP

Cinebook has transported us on a journey into deep space and across the Wild West; now we're taking to the skies...

BUCK DANNY: GHOST SQUADRON

WRITER/ARTIST: Francis Bergèse

OUT: Now

★★★

BERLIN: THE SEVEN DWARVES

WRITER/ARTIST: Marvano

OUT: Now

★★★★

There's something endearingly old-fashioned about Buck Danny, an aviation hero who's been around since 1947, serving in the US Navy (and the USAF, seemingly simultaneously; he's even helped out at NASA!) since 1947, yet remaining eternally blonde, square-jawed and relatively youthful. Yet his strips are relentlessly modern too. Let us explain.

Created by Jean-Michel Charlier and Victor Hubinon for *Spirou* magazine just after the war, Buck and his sidekicks – Jerry 'Tumb' Tumbler and Sonny Tuckson being the main guys – have fought in WW2, Korea, through the Cold War and into more recent conflicts in places like Afghanistan. There are more than 50 albums to date, writer/artist Francis Bergèse taking over since the early '90s, though the series has lately been on hiatus following his retirement. (The first album from a new creative team is apparently due soon.)

On the old-school side of the equation, it's largely the gung-ho feel of the thing that gives it such a vintage feel; that, and the fact that English language comics haven't tackled this sort of pro-military, non-SF action-adventure for decades. But a *Biggles*-esque vibe is by no means all there is to Buck Danny, which constantly walks the strangest of lines between the utterly realist and the almost laughably broad.

In terms of technology and military history, Buck's adventures always toe an impressively as-it-is line: the hardware is spot-on throughout, as are the tactics and terms. We're given Tom Clancy-esque levels of detail, with little footnotes explaining what everything is, or detailing the real-life incidents referenced by these fictional characters; present day politics (in this album, the situation in Bosnia in 1995) are front-and-centre constantly. But at the same time, this virtual documentary stuff is mixed in with broad comedy involving dogs biting folk on the nose and custard pies to the face – most of this stuff involving red-haired Texan Tuckson, the designated comedy relief. The overall feel is impressive, but a tiny bit odd.

Cinebook has begun its UK versions with the Bergèse stories, and the third offering, *Ghost Squadron* – in which Buck and co join a newly established, secret, non-attributable squadron of F-16s to combat mystery MiGs – is notable for an extended *Behind Enemy Lines*-type sequence and the introduction of a new female sidekick, hot and capable F-18 Hornet pilot Cindy McPherson. It's hard to imagine a US comic book hero allowing himself to be sidelined in his own story as Buck does – he doesn't achieve all that much here, and disappears for large chunks of the tale – but at least he does take part in a number of cool flying sequences, all spotlighting perfectly rendered warplanes (F-16s, F-14s, Tornados, Mirages and more) in easy-to-follow dogfights and sorties.

BOMBER COMMAND

Elsewhere, under a subtly branded sub-imprint called Cinebook Expresso, 'the 9th art publisher' runs its non-series tales – one-shot (or occasionally two-part) offerings, often with a historic bent. *Berlin: The Seven Dwarves* is one such, the story of a largely British Lancaster bomber crew in World War 2. Built around a framing sequence of old women wandering an abandoned Lincolnshire aerodrome and reading a newly discovered letter from one of the crew, it's handsomely staged, and packed with authentic-seeming detail – we learn how to taxi a Lanc and how to avoid a night fighter, the claustrophobia palpable throughout. And if the basic story – of young men, terrified out of their minds, raining terror and death on similarly petrified civilians for an authentically good cause – is a familiar one, depicted in everything from *Memphis Belle* through *The Dambusters* to Ennis and Lloyd's *War Stories* tale 'J For Jenny', it's undeniably moving nonetheless.

Berlin's slightly clunky title references Lancaster S-Snowwhite's most common target, and the crew of seven who go to war within her belly; many predictable points are touched upon (there's romance, and gallows humour, and damaged planes limping home), but the flying sequences are simply sensational, and the Euro-sensibility gives this a different feel to many similar tales. Panels are small, splash pages don't exist, but the mood is intense. A familiar story worth hearing again. **Matt Bielby**

SELFMADEHERO ROUND-UP

Incredible recent offerings, as sampled in *Comic Heroes Presents*...

The standard of release from SelfMadeHero – five years old this year, the London-based indie publisher now home to a wide and remarkable range of titles, from editions of the classic Moomins titles to manga takes on Shakespeare – is currently incredibly high. We've recently had Glyn Dillon's *The Nao Of Brown* – one of our favourite graphic novels of the year – and 2012 draws to a close with a range of releases, all very different, but each demonstrating what SelfMadeHero does best.

Alongside the occasional very big names it attracts (like Moebius with *The Incal*) SMH tends to showcase literary works by rising international talents, and few are rising faster than Frederik Peeters, Swiss subject of one of our *World Of Comics* features a few issues back, and winner of the Polish Jury Prize at the Angoulême International Comics Festival for the autobiographical *Blue Pills*, the well-received *Sandcastle*, and now *Pachyderme*, a dreamlike tale that keeps its secrets – like is our heroine hallucinating, or are there really strange alien babies and vagina-like doorways in the oddly empty hospital she starts to explore? – until the very end.

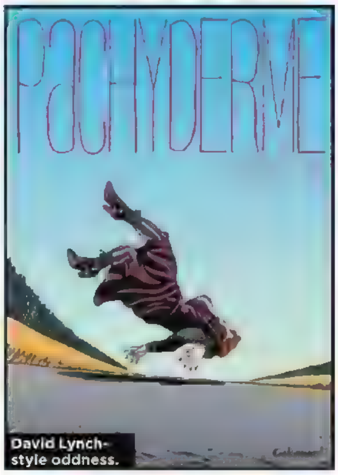
Rendered in beautiful blues and maroons, it's controlled yet playful; a low-key book that at first seems to be doing little, but haunts you long after you've put it down. As in the films of Nic Roeg, time is sliced up and played with – at one point we realise the aged corpse she's talking to is surely her future self – but the art remains steadily realistic, no matter what oddness we're witnessing. Imagine Kubrick's *The Shining* with less blood, more music. Astounding stuff.

Less immediately appealing to some – they're in black-and-white, using deceptively simple, naive styles – are Leopold Maurer's *Miller & Pynchon* and Jérémie Dres' *We Won't See Auschwitz*. Both become increasingly compelling as you read on, but they're actually very different books.

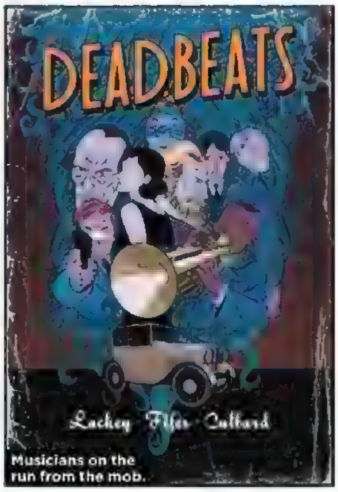
The Maurer is a playful fantasy, with such oddities as a talking crocodile and a werewolf dogging the tragicomic adventures of two very different men – imagine Mark and Jeremy from *Peep Show*, sort of – as they attempt to accurately measure the Transit of Venus, and so find out the exact distance to the sun.

The Dres, meanwhile, is a semi-autobiographical diary, detailing the adventures of a young Jewish Parisian as he undertakes a road trip to explore his family's Polish roots, doing his best to avoid the obvious landmarks of the Jewish experience in a country he believes intrinsically hostile. Of course, nothing is quite as he expects it to be, and this proves to be a wryly funny adventure where the sketchy art grows on you; Dres' buildings, in particular, are quite something.

Finally, *Deadbeats*, a jazz age zombie/Cthulhu adventure from a creative team with HP Lovecraft in their blood – clear line artist INJ Culbard, in particular, has adapted a number of Lovecraftian stories now, and this is confident, fast-moving stuff that quite races along. As with so many zombie-type tales, there's perhaps little new to be said here, but what it does, it does extremely well. We found it a hoot. **Matt Bielby**


PACHYDERME

David Lynch-style oddness.


DEADBEATS
Lackey Fifer Culbard

Musicians on the run from the mob.

PACHYDERME

WRITER/ARTIST: Frederik Peeters

OUT: Now

★★★★★

DEADBEATS

WRITERS: Chad Fifer & Chris Lackey

ARTIST: INJ Culbard

OUT: Now

★★★½

MILLER & PYNCHON

WRITER/ARTIST: Leopold Maurer

OUT: Now

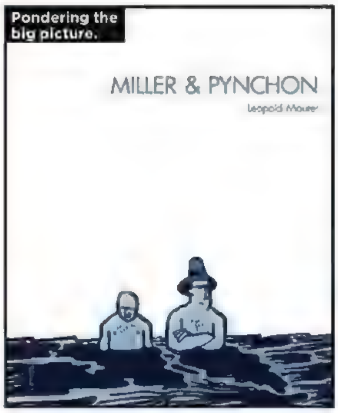
★★★★

WE WON'T SEE AUSCHWITZ

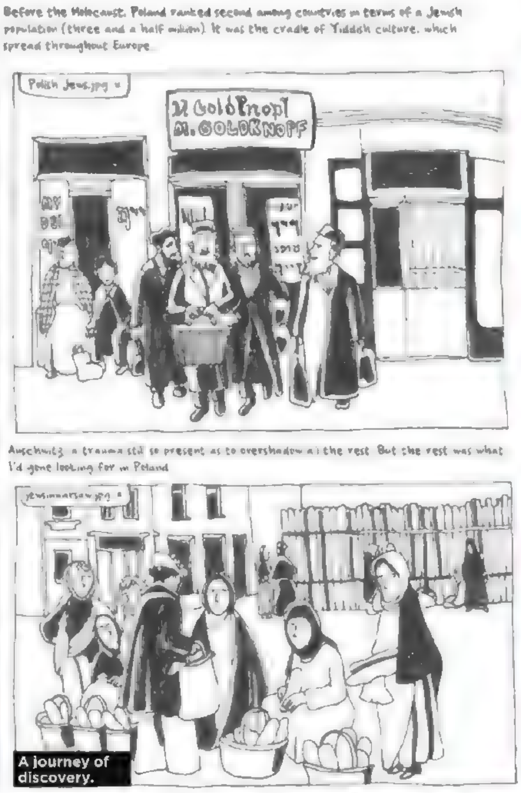
WRITER/ARTIST: Jérémie Dres

OUT: Now

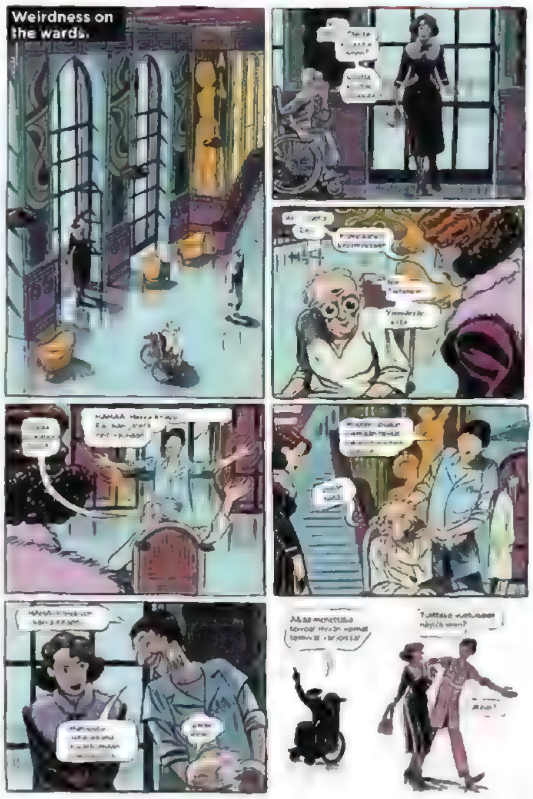
★★★½


MILLER & PYNCHON
Leopold Maurer

Pondering the big picture.


Before the Holocaust, Poland ranked second among countries in terms of a Jewish population (three and a half million). It was the cradle of Yiddish culture, which spread throughout Europe.
Polish Jews.jpg
M. Goldknopf
M. GOLDKNOPF
Auschwitz, a trauma still so present as to overshadow all the rest. But the rest was what I'd gone looking for in Poland.

A journey of discovery.



Weirdness on the wards.

KRACKERS
KRACKERS COMICS & GAMES

COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • TOYS
WARHAMMER • DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
STAR WARS • MAGIC: THE GATHERING
DR WHO • KID ROBOT • FAMILY GUY
FUTURAMA AND HALO

5 BATH PLACE, TAUNTON, SOMERSET TA1 4ER TEL: (01823) 335 057
WWW.KRACKERS.COM

PARADOX
www.paradoxcomics.co.uk
Mail Order Specialists
Comic & Action Figures
PARADOX, 17 High Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1AB
Tel: 01202 661346 email: paradox@paradoxcomics.co.uk

THE SHEFFIELD SPACE CENTRE
Stockists of US Comics, Anime & Manga, SF Merchandise and more!
The Sheffield Space Centre
33 The Wicker, Sheffield, S3 8HS.
Tel 0114 2758905
Open 10am to 5pm Mon to Fri
9am to 5pm Sat, Closed Sundays
Visit our website at www.space-centre.co.uk

HULLYWOOD ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS...
MOVIE BUFFS.co.uk
COLLECTORS FAIR

SAT 4TH MAY 2013
HULL - PROSPECT SHOPPING CENTRE

Cult TV & Film Memorabilia * Sci-Fi & Fantasy * Autographs
Artwork * Retro/Vintage Toys * Trading Cards * Models Etc.
ADMISSION: ADULTS £4.00 CHILDREN £2.50 (UNDER 3'S FREE)
DEALERS WANTED: BOOK A STALL contact Nick on:
Tel: 07812 859 205 or Email: nick@hullywoodentertainment.co.uk

SHOWMASTERS PRESENTS...
LONDON
COMIC MART
FREE ENTRY! DOORS OPEN 12PM
AT THE ROYAL NATIONAL HOTEL, LONDON, WC1H 0DG...
BUY, SELL & TRADE YOUR COMICS AND OTHER MERCHANDISE
THOUSANDS OF COMICS AND COLLECTABLES UNDER ONE ROOF

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS!
ARTISTS AND WRITERS SIGNING AND SKETCHING ALL DAY
CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR THE LATEST GUEST ANNOUNCEMENTS OR OUR NEW FACEBOOK PAGE LONDONCOMICMART

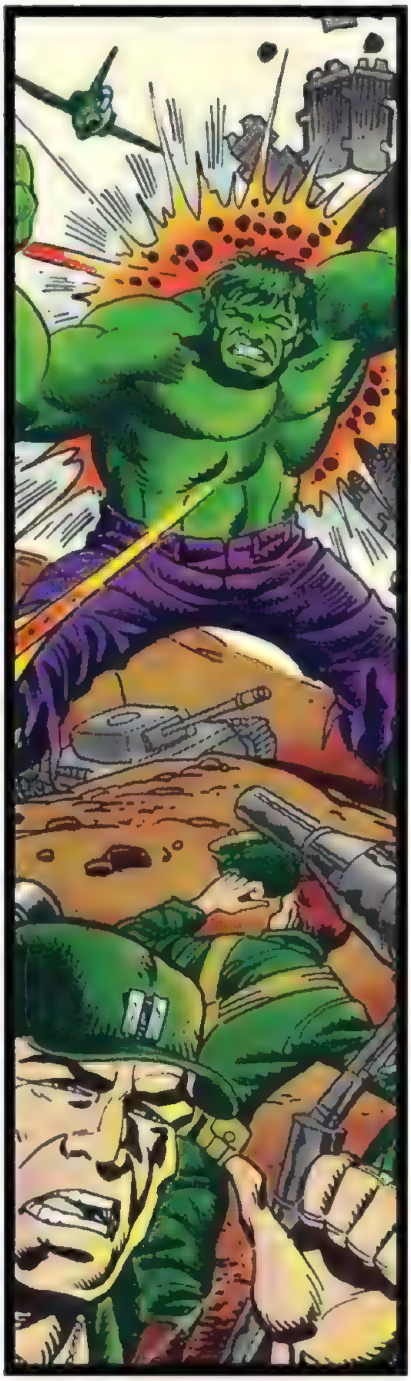
2013 DATES:
SUN 3RD FEB
SUN 3RD MAR
SUN 7TH APR
SUN 5TH MAY
SUN 2ND JUNE
SUN 4TH AUG
SUN 1ST SEPT
SUN 6TH OCT
SUN 3RD NOV
SUN 1ST DEC

IF YOU'RE INTO GOLD & SILVER AGE OR MODERN COMICS, LONDON COMIC MART IS THE PLACE TO FIND WHAT YOU WANT!
DO YOU HAVE UNWANTED COMICS?
DEALERS TABLES AVAILABLE FROM £50.
FOR MORE INFO RING 01908 671138 OR
E-MAIL INFO@SHOWMASTERSONLINE.COM
WWW.LONDONCOMICMART.COM

World's Finest

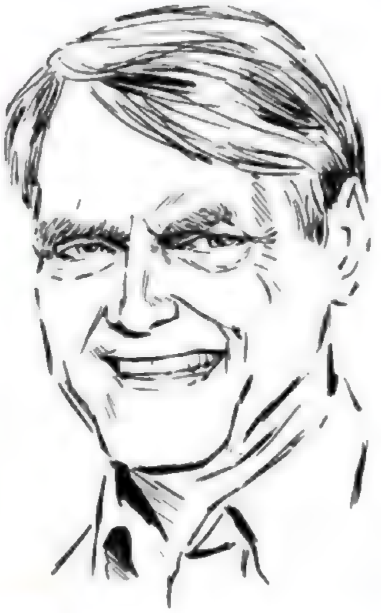
In conversation with the comic book legends...

Herb Trimpe



Monster maker

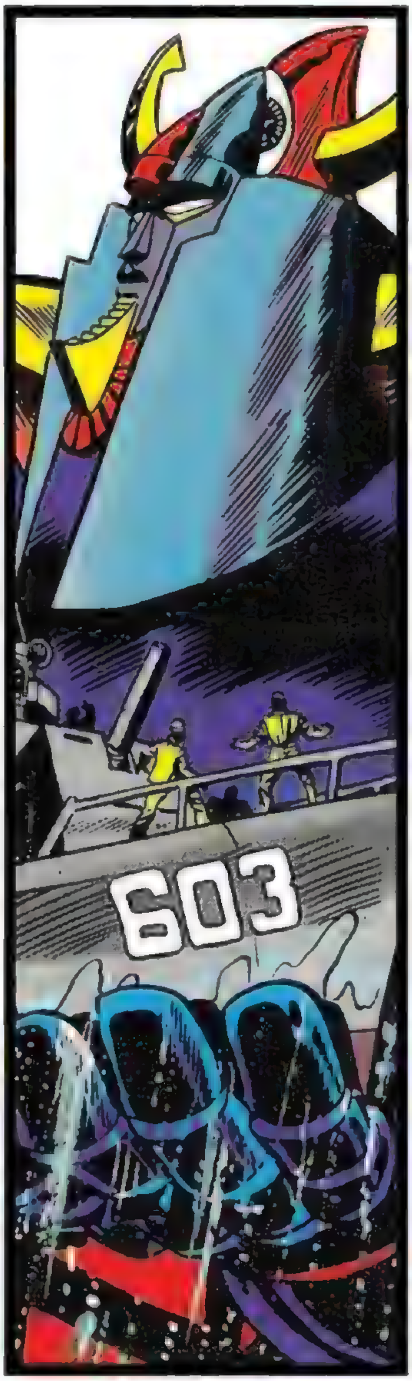
Words by David Currie



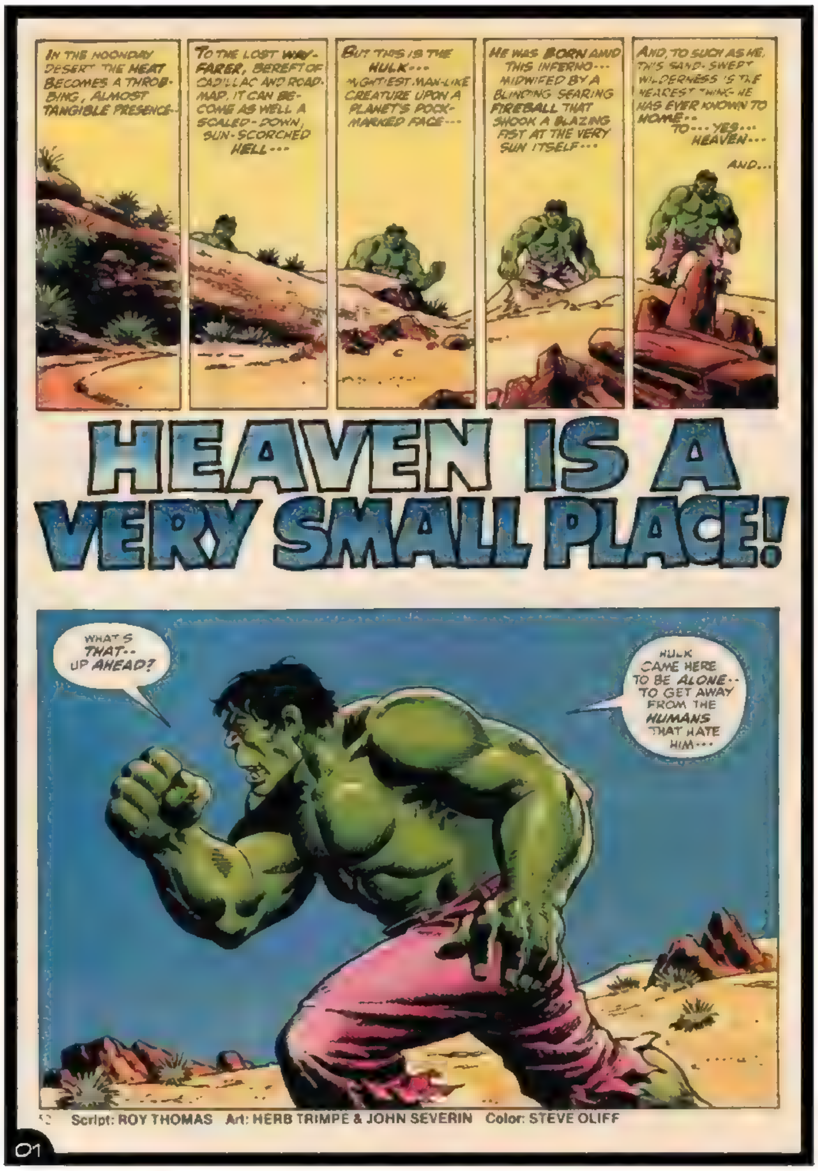
> “I really don’t like superheroes all that much!”

Way before CGI Hulks were smashing puny gods in widescreen blockbusters, Marvel’s emerald giant shuffled across our square ’70s TV screens in a prime-time show. His rages were limited – generally just one or two per episode – but his slow-mo smashing of polystyrene walls, together with *Fugitive*-style human drama, became a legitimate TV success story, enjoying high ratings and introducing the world at large to Marvel Comics and its stable of characters.

It’s sometimes hard to get our heads around now, but back then Marvel heroes weren’t household names. “Everyone knew Batman and Superman,” says Herb Trimpe, “but it wasn’t until *The*



All images © Marvel & DC Comics


IN THE NOONDAY DESERT THE HEAT BECOMES A THROBBING, ALMOST TANGIBLE PRESENCE--
TO THE LOST WAYFARER, BEREFT OF CADILLAC AND ROAD-MAP, IT CAN BECOME AS WELL A SCALED-DOWN, SUN-SCORCHED HELL...
BUT THIS IS THE HULK... MIGHTIEST MAN-LIKE CREATURE UPON A PLANET'S POCK-MARKED FACE...
HE WAS BORN AMID THIS INFERNO... MIDWIFED BY A BLINDING SEARING FIREBALL THAT SHOOK A BLAZING FIST AT THE VERY SUN ITSELF...
AND, TO SUCH AS HE, THIS SAND-SWEPT WILDERNESS IS THE NEAREST THING HE HAS EVER KNOWN TO HOME.. TO... YES... HEAVEN...
AND...
HEAVEN IS A VERY SMALL PLACE!
WHAT'S THAT-- UP AHEAD?
HULK CAME HERE TO BE ALONE-- TO GET AWAY FROM THE HUMANS THAT HATE HIM...
Script: ROY THOMAS Art: HERB TRIMPE & JOHN SEVERIN Color: STEVE OLIFF
01

Incredible Hulk television show, first broadcast in 1978, that the world started to take notice of Marvel."

It's an observation Trimpe's well qualified to make. For many there remains, to this day, but one definitive *Hulk* artist – his astonishing seven-year run on the title defining the classic version of the character, introducing many villains and elements still used today, and cementing the core look of Ol' Greenskin. With a blocky, powerful, thick-lined look – sometime awkward on regular folk, but perfect for almost Pop Art depictions of the monsters, spaceships, robots, bonkers future-tech and military hardware that dominate many a *Hulk* tale – Trimpe created a darker place than the regular Marvel Universe often felt, full of Cold War tensions and *Twilight Zone* weirdness. His characters pointing their fingers directly at the viewer became a popular Trimpe trope too.

It's quite some achievement, but only one aspect of a long and incredible career. Trimpe was also the first to draw Wolverine for publication, the original artist of *Captain Britain* (drawing the first 25 issues for his UK Marvel strip), and he enjoyed major runs on a slew of what are now household names, including *Iron Man*, *Godzilla* and *GI Joe*. During a three-decade career, he tackled issues of almost every major Marvel comic, often introducing the sort of moody, bravura storytelling we more readily associate with the likes of Jim Steranko: rain falling constantly, for instance, or panels sliced into chunks to show the passing of time.

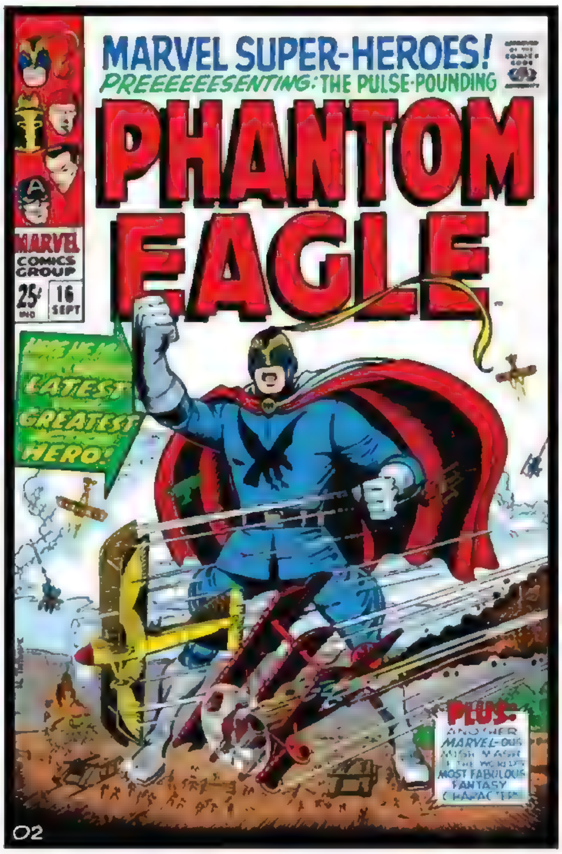
Away from the industry, Trimpe is a man full of surprises too. Ask him about career highlights and he'll stun you – "outside of family, it's the fact I can fly airplanes" – while he's as enthusiastic about his time in the late '90s teaching in New York art schools as he is his comics career. He's got surprisingly strong links with the UK too. "I actually got my licence to fly in England," he says, 73 and still highly active. "I managed to find an airfield in Bodmin, Cornwall and did it there."

Upfront, self-effacing, full of roguish charm and wonderfully direct and honest, Trimpe's a delightful interviewee.

COMIC HEROES: We know it's hard, but what's your earliest memory?
HERB TRIMPE: That's such a freakin' spooky and unique question! I remember actually being awake in my crib, well before daylight, and my dad getting ready to go to work in the kitchen. There was light coming through the bedroom door, and I remember hearing voices.

01 ***Incredible Hulk* #147, 1972**
Trimpe's first major assignment lasted seven years and became his defining project.

02 ***Marvel Super-Heroes* #16, 1968**
Writer Gary Friedrich created the war hero Phantom Eagle to service Trimpe's love of planes.


MARVEL SUPER-HEROES!
PREEEEEEESENTING: THE PULSE-POUNDING
PHANTOM EAGLE
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
25¢
16 SEPT
LATEST GREATEST HERO!
PLUS: ANOTHER MARVEL-OUS ... MOST FABULOUS FANTASY CHARACTER
02

CH: And we're guessing you read comic books growing up...?
HT: Prior to Middle School, it was a lot of Disney comics: great adventure stories with Scrooge McDuck and the rest. Later, it was mostly DC and Fawcett – *The Little Rascals*, *Plastic Man* and *Captain Marvel*, as well as *Superman* and *Wonder Woman*. I wasn't a big fan of *Batman*; even then it seemed too dark for me.

Then, as we hit the '50s, the space programs really grabbed my interest. So much so, I kept a scrapbook on the first seven astronauts and each of their flights during the Mercury years. It was a very exciting time, especially since I was already well-versed in all the great sci-fi writers: Bradbury, Asimov, Heinlein, Clark and others.

CH: So does your interest in aviation go back to those times?
HT: It does. Me and another neighbourhood kid built models – not the current plastic kits, but large balsa-and-tissue airplanes that flew, powered with rubber bands. We usually disposed of them by setting them on fire and launching them down a nearby hill!

CH: So as a young comics fan, there must have been artists who were important to you too...
HT: I was in love with EC comics, and still am: Jack Davis, Wally Wood, John Severin, Johnny Craig, Alex Toth, George Evans, Bill Elder and, of course, Harvey Kurtzman – I apologise if I've left anyone out. Their work outshone those ridiculous superheroes by a mile.

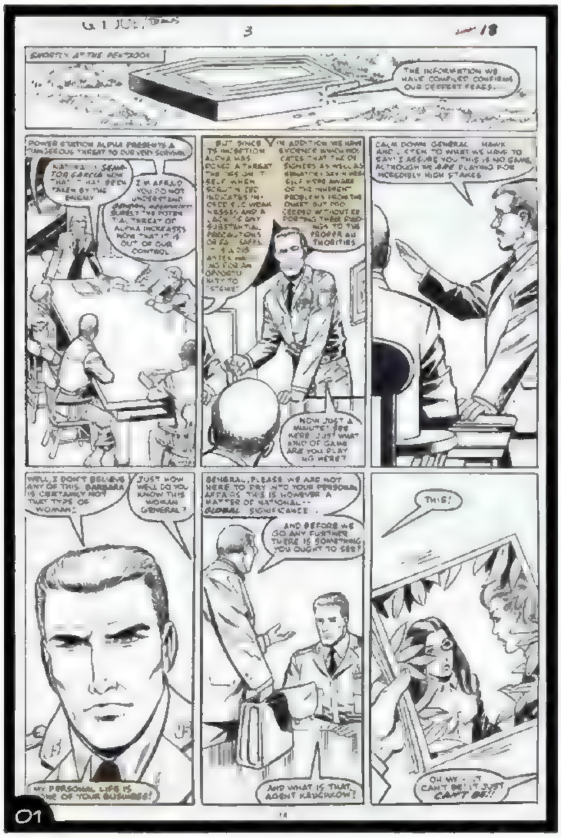
Then there was Bill Gaines. Did you know it was his dad who created the comic book format? [Trimpe is referring here to Maxwell Gaines who, in 1933, invented the comic book shape and size we know today by taking a *Sunday Newspaper Funnies Supplement* of the time and folding it in half. He initially began by reprinting the Sunday strips in this saddle-stitched format, then »

01&2 ***GI Joe And The Transformers* #3, 1987**

Trimpe made more contributions to *GI Joe* than perhaps any other artist.

03 ***Kid Colt: Outlaw* #134, 1967**

The *Kid Colt* Western stories: one of Trimpe's first professional pencilling jobs.

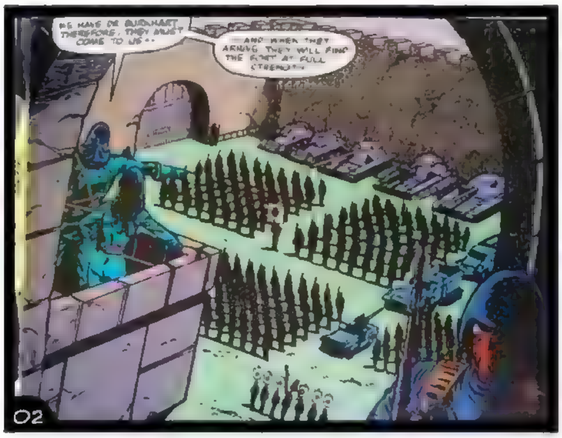

G.I. JOE
3
18
THE INFORMATION WE HAVE COMPILED CONFIRMS OUR DEEPEST FEARS.
POWER STATION ALPHA PRESENTS A DANGEROUS THREAT TO OUR VERY SURVIVAL.
CALM DOWN GENERAL HAWK AND LISTEN TO WHAT WE HAVE TO SAY! I ASSURE YOU THIS IS NO GAME, ALTHOUGH WE ARE PLAYING FOR INCREDIBLY HIGH STAKES.
NOW JUST A MINUTE! SEE HERE! JUST WHAT KIND OF GAME ARE YOU PLAYING HERE?
WELL, I DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF THIS. BARBARA IS CERTAINLY NOT THAT TYPE OF WOMAN!
JUST HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN, GENERAL?
GENERAL, PLEASE! WE ARE NOT HERE TO PRY INTO YOUR PERSONAL AFFAIRS. THIS IS HOWEVER A MATTER OF NATIONAL -- GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE.
AND BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER THERE IS SOMETHING YOU OUGHT TO SEE!
THIS!
MY PERSONAL LIFE IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!
AND WHAT IS THAT, AGENT KRUCHKOW?
OH MY -- IT CAN'T BE! IT JUST CAN'T BE!!
01

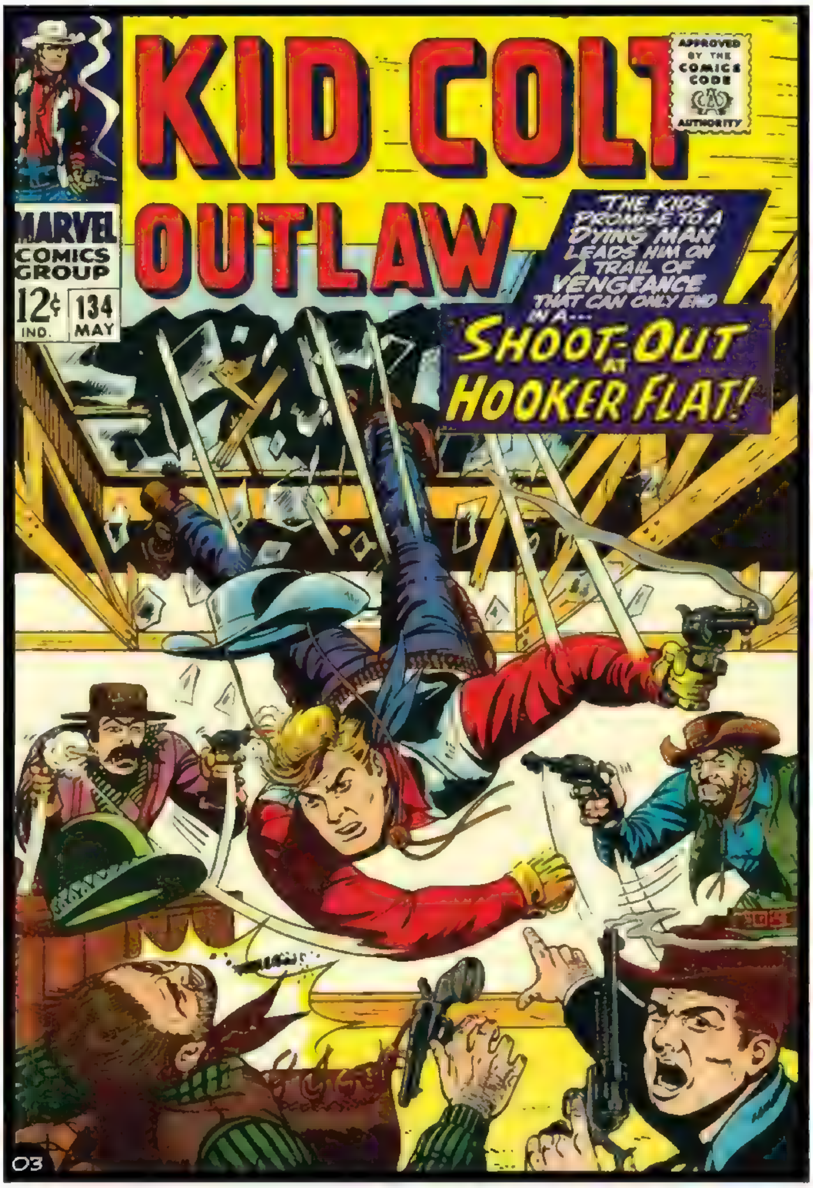
replacing them with new material, thereby giving the world the comic book.]

CH: What do you remember from your early days working at Dell Comics in the late '50s?
HT: I worked part-time for Tom Gill at Dell. I was straight from the School of Visual Arts in New York, where Tom was a cartooning instructor and I'd studied for three years. I didn't do much: Tom finished the main characters and action and I inked the backgrounds. I was mainly killing time before the military draft caught up with me; when it did, I enlisted in the US Air Force for four years, including a year as a weatherman in Vietnam. We supplied aviation weather supports to the First Air Cavalry Division in the central highlands.

THE BULLPEN BECKONS!

Herb Trimpe first joined Marvel Comics in October 1966, the same month he was discharged from the USAF. The door was opened for him by friend, and then Production Manager, John Verpoorten. His only experience of Marvel at the time was a single *Thor* comic he'd read while still in Vietnam but, nonetheless, the 27-year-old artist joined the blushin' Bullpen as the decade hit second gear; Stan Lee was in his pomp, insisting that they were creating 'Pop-Art Productions', and not your father's comics.


WE HAVE DR. BURKHART. THEREFORE, THEY MUST COME TO US--
--AND WHEN THEY ARRIVE THEY WILL FIND THE FORT AT FULL STRENGTH.
02

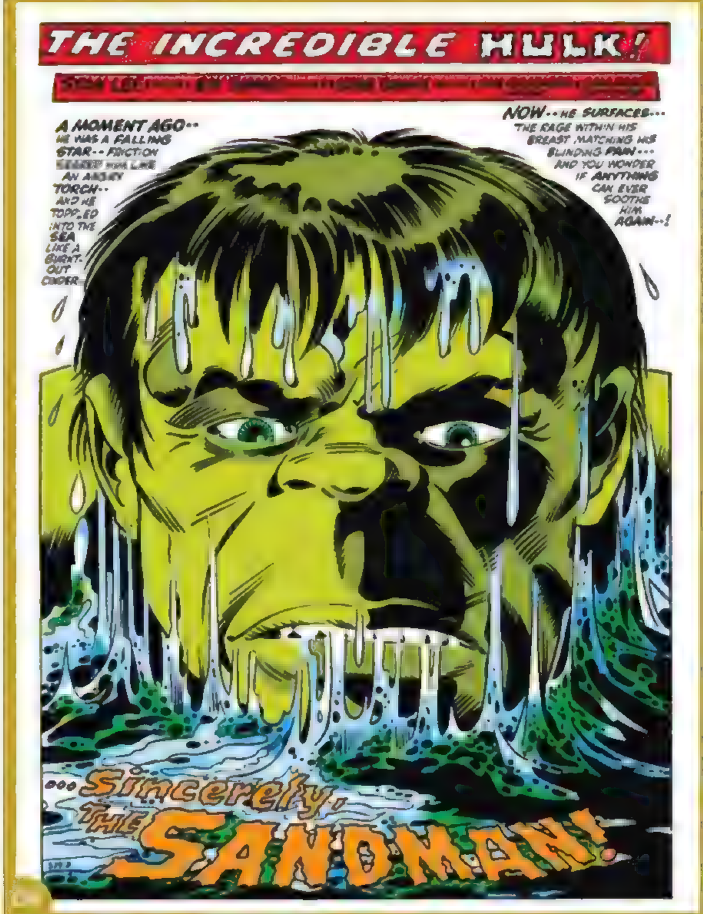

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
KID COLT OUTLAW
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ IND.
134 MAY
THE KID'S PROMISE TO A DYING MAN LEADS HIM ON A TRAIL OF VENGEANCE THAT CAN ONLY END IN A...
SHOOT-OUT AT HOOKER FLAT!
03

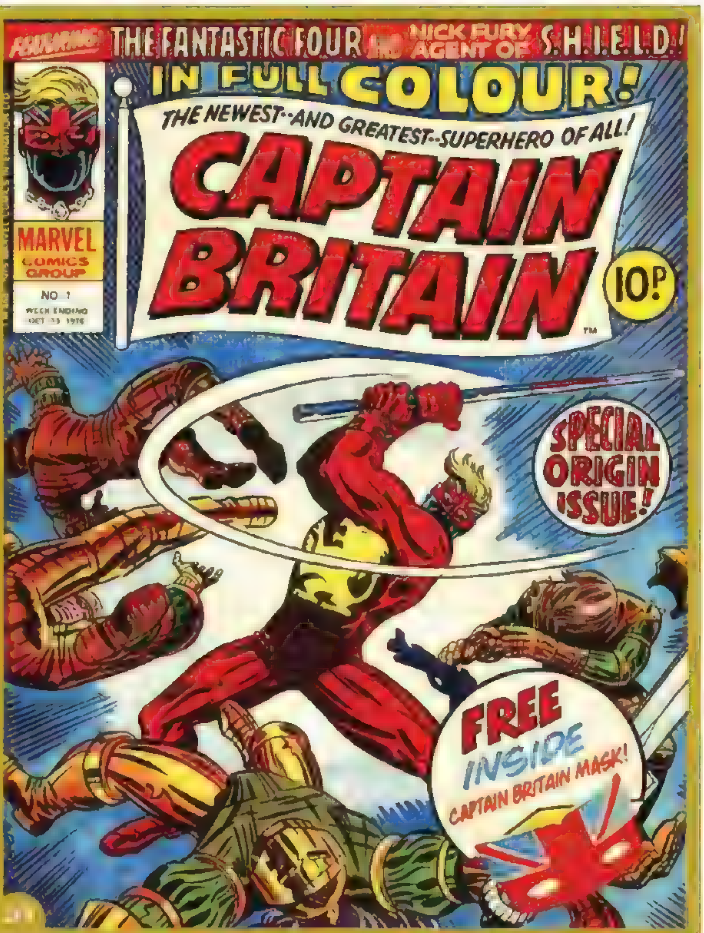
CH: What are your memories of early Marvel?
HT: I actually began inking the Westerns – titles like *Kid Colt* and *Two-Gun Kid* – and, when I got on staff, it was because of an opening in the production department. Marvel had just bought a gigantic photocopy machine, which housed a camera, an adjustable table to shoot on, and the regular chemical baths you'd have for developing black-and-white photography. It was a full-time position, copying art pages for the production department, but it also meant I could pick up freelance work as an artist on the side.

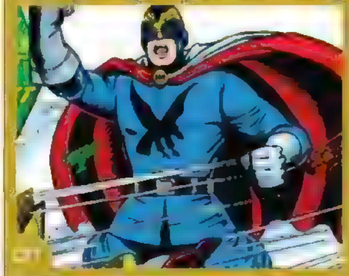
CH: And did you enjoy it?
HT: 'Fun' is the main word that comes to mind! There was no great sense of self-importance from anyone – or that comics themselves had any particular significance. It was just a pleasant working environment, with nice people.

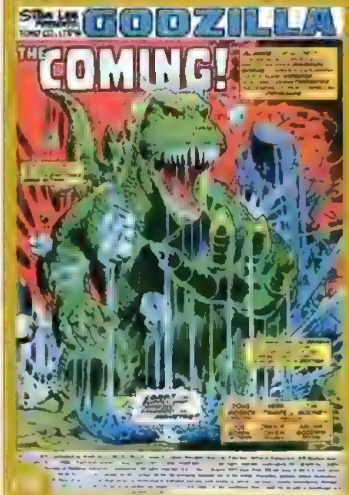
Some of us went to lunch once in a while, for instance, and we had a team in the publishers' softball league. But there was none of the social aspect we see today where, for instance, at conventions all the stars spend hours getting hammered. Naturally, there are tons of memories, enough to write a book, but I'm not particularly into all that. I try to live in the here and now, and get a little resentful at having to dwell on the past to make a buck. It just ain't my style. Of course, this is not to say I don't enjoy the fans, which my wife and I most certainly do.

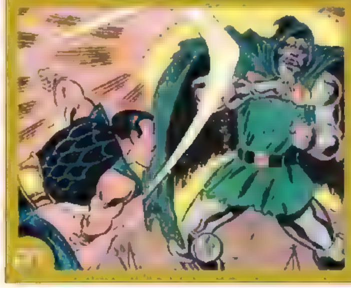
CH: We're getting the impression it didn't seem that special at the time...?
HT: This type of thing is really hard to explain to people who are deeply into comics now. My first impression of people like Jack Kirby, Stan Lee and Steve Ditko was, basically, 'Hi, how are you? Nice to meet you'. There was no buzz, no sense of, 'Oh, joy!' I remember there was so much returned original art just lying around in the office – they didn't know what to do with it! – though, eventually,


THE INCREDIBLE HULK!
A MOMENT AGO-- HE WAS A FALLING STAR-- FRICTION SEARED HIM LIKE AN ANGRY TORCH-- AND HE TOPPLED INTO THE SEA LIKE A GIANT, OUT CINDER--
NOW--HE SURFACES-- THE RAGE WITHIN HIS BREAST MATCHING HIS BLINDING PAIN--- AND YOU WONDER IF ANYTHING CAN EVER SOOTHE HIM AGAIN--!
...Sincerely, THE SANDMAN!


FEATURING THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND NICK FURY AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!
IN FULL COLOUR!
THE NEWEST--AND GREATEST--SUPERHERO OF ALL!
CAPTAIN BRITAIN
10P
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
NO. 1
SPECIAL ORIGIN ISSUE!
FREE INSIDE CAPTAIN BRITAIN MASK!




GODZILLA
COMING!



Herb Trimpe | Major Works

01 THE PHANTOM EAGLE | 1968
Trimpe's first creation for Marvel, a costumed WW1 flying ace dreamed up by writer Gary Friedrich.

02 THE INCREDIBLE HULK | 1968-1975
Bizarre monsters, crazy plots, heaps of heartbreak, and perhaps more quoted poetry than any other Marvel book.

03 CAPTAIN BRITAIN | 1976-1977
Trimpe launched Marvel's British hero as a sort of cross between Spider-Man and Captain America, but with a mystic, supernatural flavour.

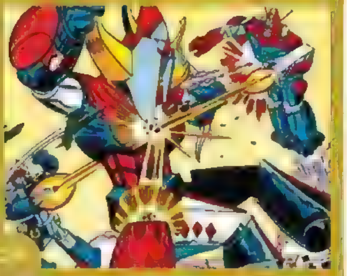
04 GODZILLA | 1977-1979
A game attempt to remain loyal to official Toho movie continuity while slotting the nuclear dino into the Marvel U.

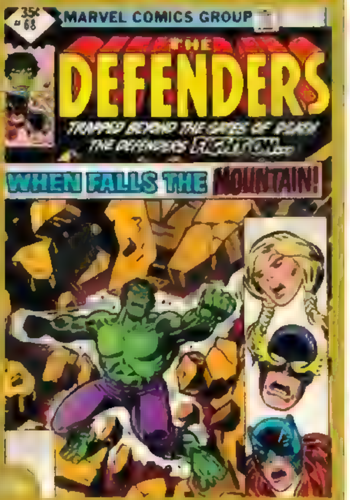
05 SHOGUN WARRIORS | 1979-1980
Trimpe adapted Mattel's Transformers-like toy line to comics, with mega-destruction at the fore.

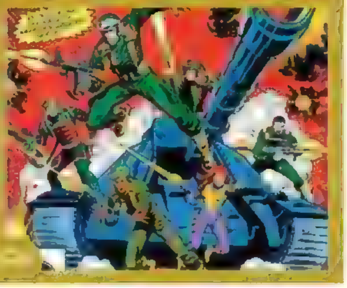
06 THE DEFENDERS | 1979-1980
Trimpe would return to the Hulk for an unremarkable year or so on the 'non-team' of which he was a member.

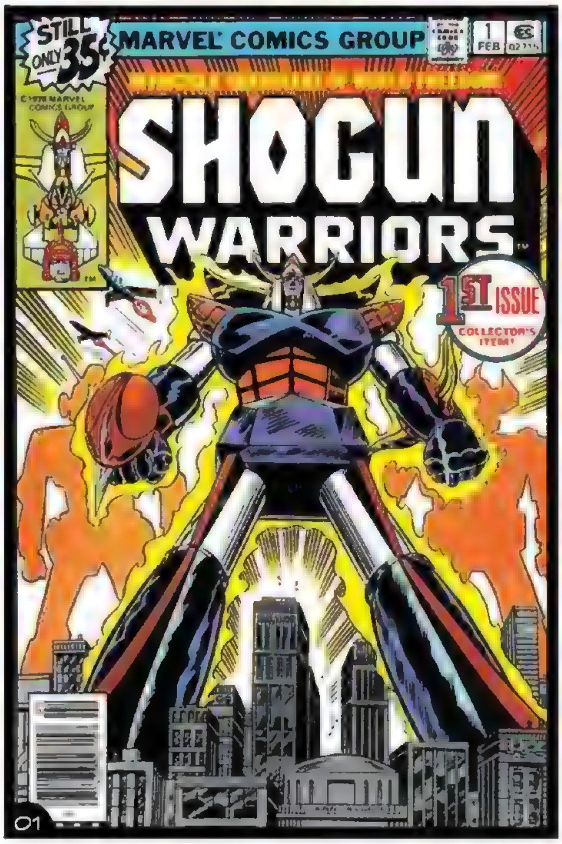
07 MARVEL TEAM-UP | 1981-1982
Trimpe drew issues of everything from Thor to Ka-Zar in his time at Marvel; in his year on *Marvel Team-Up* he ticked off plenty more, from Dazzler to She-Hulk, Falcon to King Kull.

08 GI JOE | 1982-1989
Later in his Marvel career, Trimpe had become the go-to guy for all-action toy adaptations and he was around for the creation of many major *GI Joe* concepts, including baddies Cobra, and characters like the Baroness.




MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE DEFENDERS
WHEN FALLS THE MOUNTAIN!





01 ***Shogun Warriors* #1, 1979**
Marvel licensed the anime robots for a 20-issue run written by Doug Moench and drawn by Trimpe.

they started to return it to the artists, and pencillers would trade pages with the inkers to put together a complete book.

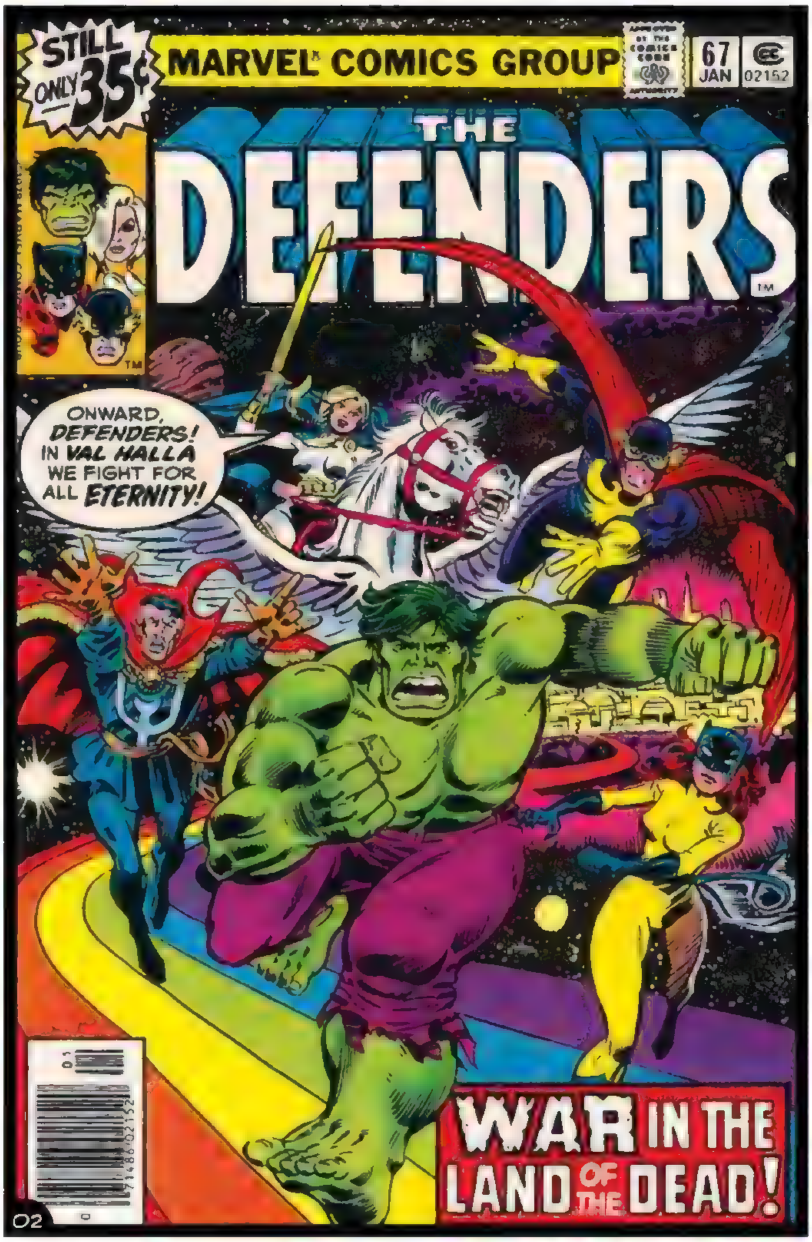
CH: Kirby, Lee and Ditko, though! Those guys are legends...

HT: Jack Kirby, of course, was a working comic book machine. He came into the office on rare occasions – the number of times he did while I was there I could probably count on one hand – but he had a special significance because his style was so strong and exciting. And he was fast! Speed doesn't mean much these days, but he was born to do what he did, no doubt about it. I had the pleasure of inking some of his pencilled pages, and Kirby could be inked while sleeping, drunk, taking a shower. It was all there, and he drew in a language that was immediate. It was easy – you had no choice as to how to handle it.

CH: And the others?

HT: I didn't appreciate Stan, other than him being a fun boss, until later. Particularly, his genius of allowing the artist to tell the story – and this coming from a writer! He saw the artist as the one who visualised the story, and the one to pace it. The writer was basically an ideas person and a scripter, but the artist was the director of the movie – it was a very strong and influential position to be in and, as I've said, a helluva lot of fun.

> *“I'd consider my run on Hulk as the highlight”*



STILL ONLY 35¢
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
67 JAN
THE DEFENDERS
ONWARD, DEFENDERS! IN VAL HALLA WE FIGHT FOR ALL ETERNITY!
WAR IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD!
02

02 ***The Defenders* #67, 1978**
Trimpe returned to the Hulk for a – somewhat uninspiring – year's run on *The Defenders*.

Stan was around a lot, but once he moved to the West Coast his visits to the Bullpen got less frequent. I'm not sure if I ever met Steve Ditko, but I loved John Romita better. He's a great guy, with the talent of a classical artist, and we were cell mates in our cubicle at the Marvel offices. I thought, however, that Ditko's *Spider-Man* had a special funky flair to it – and his Peter Parker was the nerd he was supposed to be.

CH: What was New York itself like during that period? Do you now find it's changed greatly in the years you've been away?

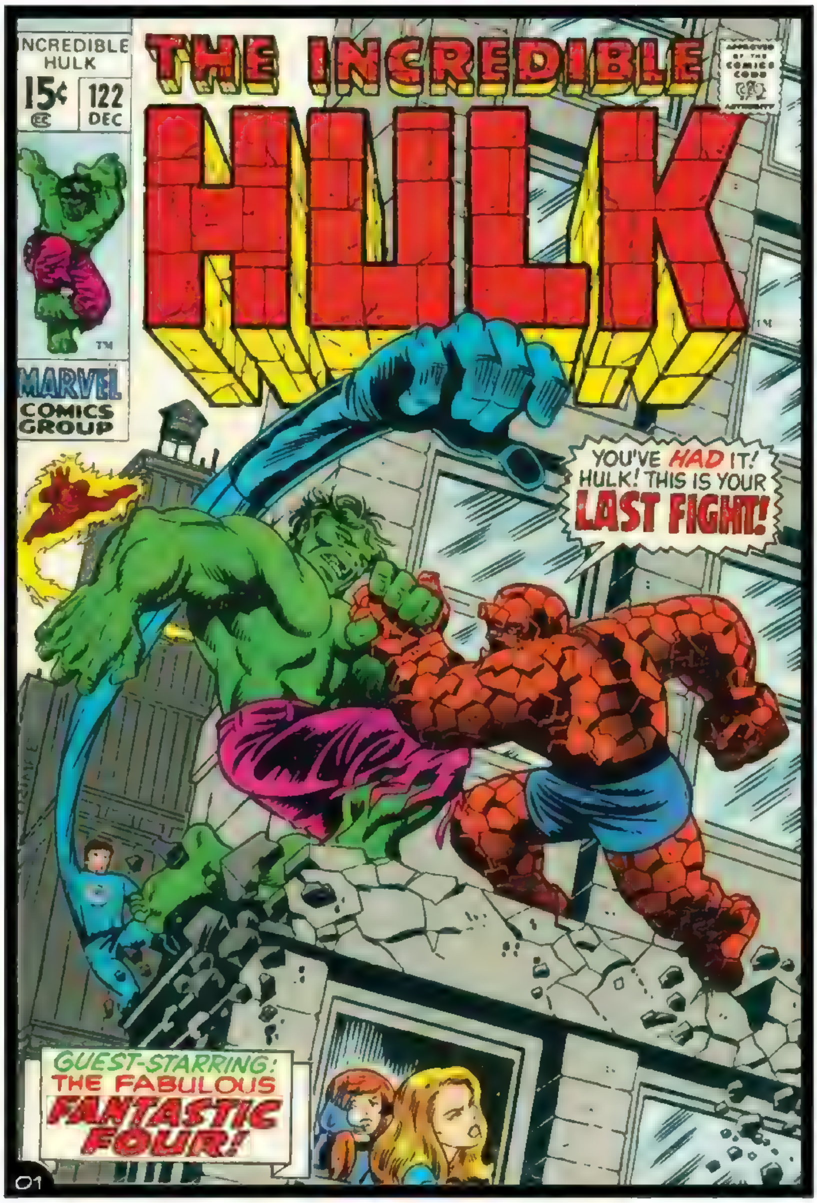
HT: No, it was the same. Just as now, basically, except today NY is expensive and probably a lot safer. The lower East Side, Avenues A, B and C, were shitholes back then. Now it's all middle-class apartments and high rises, and the same for the West Side along the Hudson River. It's a great city, but very short on public bathrooms. You have to spend 40 bucks on lunch just to take a pee!

GREEN DAYS

After making his pencilling debut on *Kid Colt*, Herb Trimpe, along with writer Gary Freidrich, created the World War 1 aviator hero The Phantom Eagle for *Marvel Superheroes* #16 in September 1968, and in doing so kicked off a career at the House of Ideas that would endure until 1996, when Marvel teetered on bankruptcy and many creators were suddenly cut adrift.

CH: Do you remember if you were happy with the results of your first pencilling assignments?

HT: I was never happy with my pencilling. I'm still not happy with it. I don't really like drawing that much, but I've got a few things down, and I can do them fast and make a buck. I'm a lot happier with my writing but, in truth, I'm almost never happy in general. I can feel content, unthreatened or secure – but I'm not even sure what 'happy' means. [Ironic, then, that Herb's Bullpen name – bestowed upon him by Stan Lee, and as seen in the credit boxes where Jack was 'King', Ditko was 'Sturdy' etc – was 'Happy' Herb Trimpe!]


INCREDIBLE HULK
15¢
122
DEC
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
YOU'VE HAD IT! HULK! THIS IS YOUR LAST FIGHT!
GUEST-STARRING: THE FABULOUS FANTASTIC FOUR!
01

01 ***Incredible Hulk* #122, 1969**

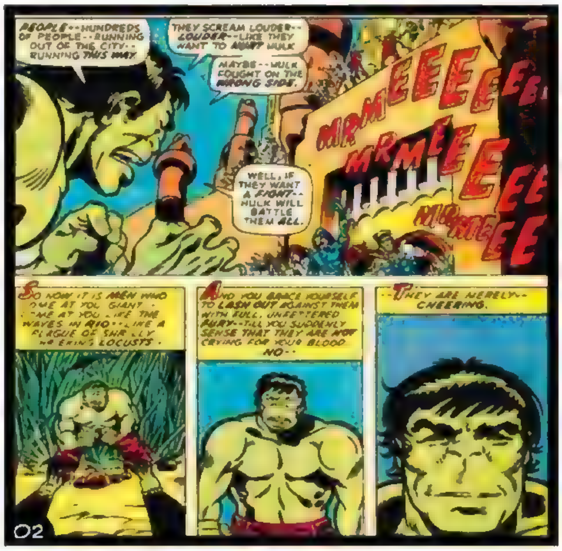
The Hulk would become Trimpe's signature character.

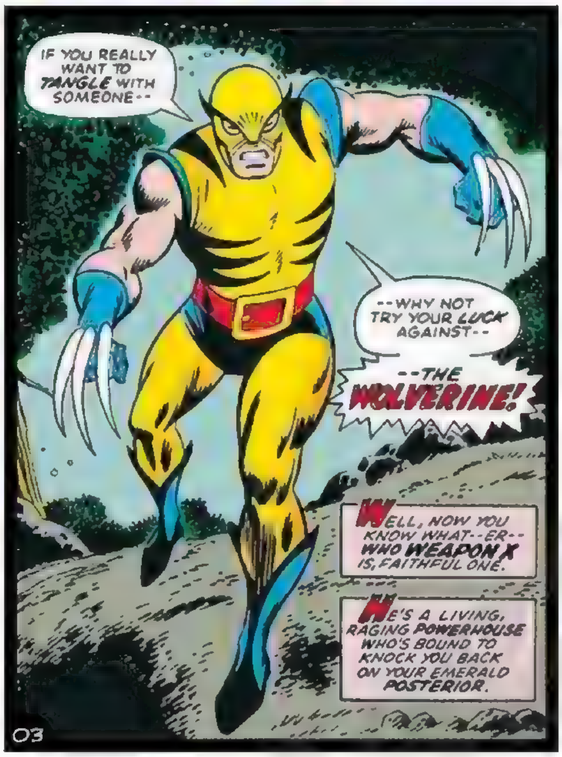
02 ***Incredible Hulk* #140, 1971**

Sci-fi writer Harlan Ellison penned this famous *Hulk* issue.

03 ***Incredible Hulk* #180, 1974**

Trimpe was the very first artist to draw Wolverine.


PEOPLE -- HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE -- RUNNING OUT OF THE CITY -- RUNNING THIS WAY.
THEY SCREAM LOUDER -- LOUDER -- LIKE THEY WANT TO HURT HULK
MAYBE -- HULK FOUGHT ON THE WRONG SIDE.
WELL, IF THEY WANT A FIGHT -- HULK WILL BATTLE THEM ALL.
MRMEEEEEEE
MRMEEEEE
MRMEEEE
SO NOW IT IS MEN WHO COME AT YOU, GIANT -- COME AT YOU LIKE THE WAVES IN RIO -- LIKE A PLAGUE OF SHRILLY KEENING LOCUSTS.
AND YOU BRACE YOURSELF TO LASH OUT AGAINST THEM WITH FULL, UNFETTERED FURY -- TILL YOU SUDDENLY SENSE THAT THEY ARE NOT CRYING FOR YOUR BLOOD -- NO --
-- THEY ARE MERELY -- CHEERING.
02


IF YOU REALLY WANT TO TANGLE WITH SOMEONE --
-- WHY NOT TRY YOUR LUCK AGAINST --
-- THE WOLVERINE!
WELL, NOW YOU KNOW WHAT -- ER -- WHO WEAPON X IS, FAITHFUL ONE.
HE'S A LIVING, RAGING POWERHOUSE WHO'S BOUND TO KNOCK YOU BACK ON YOUR EMERALD POSTERIOR.
03

CH: When you approach a comic page, do you produce prelims first or pencil straight to board?
HT: I usually do thumbnails, about 2.5 x 3.5in. I blow them up full-page size, and then do finishes from them on a lightbox. At Marvel I averaged three pencilled pages a day. More comfortably, two was more like it. But when I was drawing three books a month in the late '70s – things like *Godzilla*, *Shogun Warriors*, *The Defenders* – I had to do three complete pages a day. And I thought that was some of my best work. The fastest I ever completed a whole book was three days. Maybe four, counting the cover. It was an *Iron Man* issue – and it shows.

CH: In 1971 you began a seven-year run on *The Incredible Hulk*, who most people consider to be your signature character...
HT: In retrospect, I would consider my run on *Hulk* as the highlight of my comics' career. It was certainly the time when working in comics was the most fun. As for the character itself, I really thought Stan and Jack had nailed the concept of the Hulk when they treated him very much in the Jekyll & Hyde vein, and I preferred that to superheroes. I really don't like superheroes all that much! [laughs]

I had help on the first few issues I drew from Marie Severin, who'd been drawing the title previously. Marie is a very funny, but an astutely critical lady. Nothing got by her, but she was more than willing to help with anything you might need. As I got into the run, though, I worked mostly from home. We lived in Manhattan at the time, and it wasn't far from the Marvel offices. A couple of blocks once, then a short ride on the subway another time.

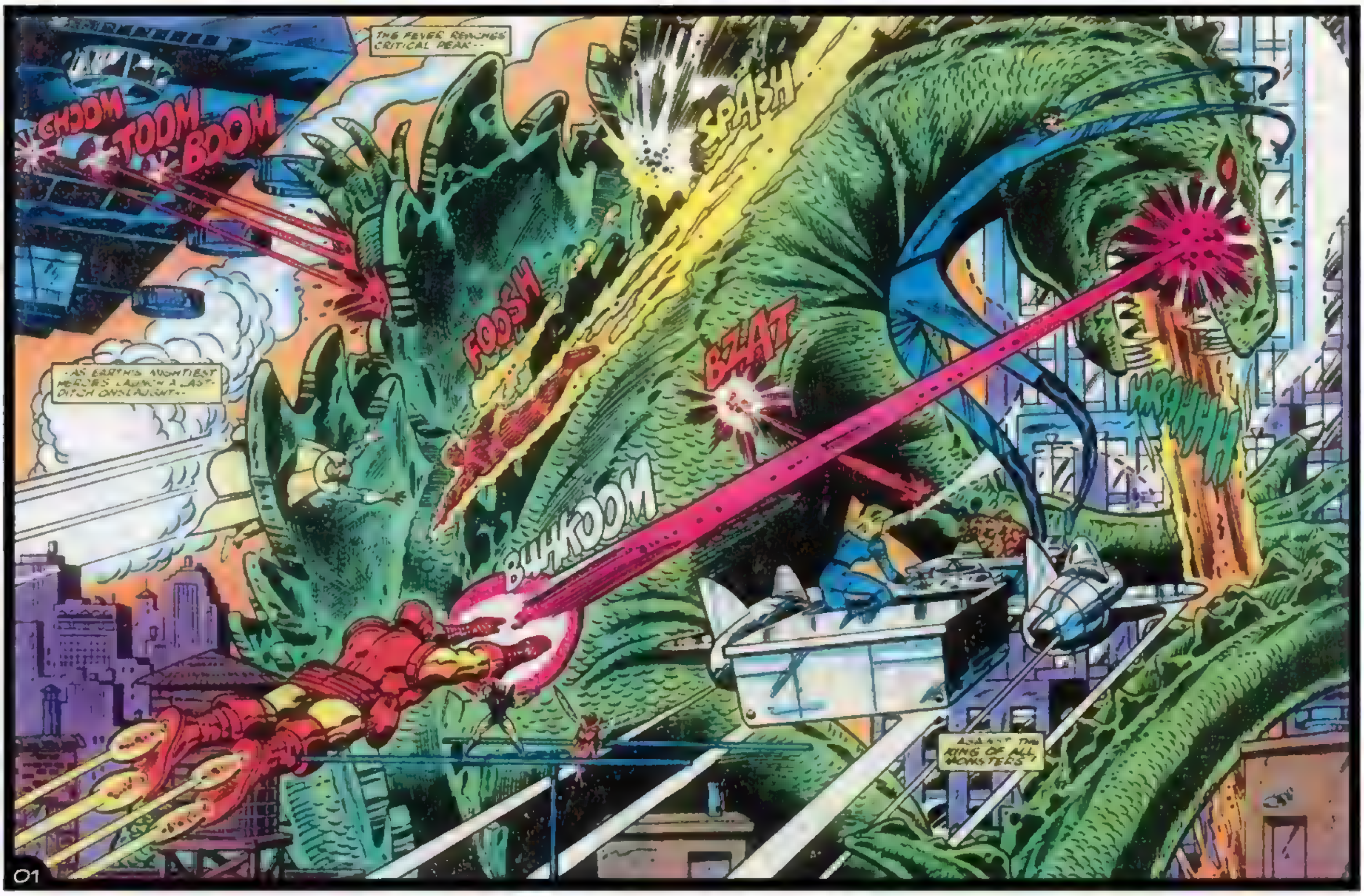
Though I liked to ink my own work, because I could go easier on the pencils, I believe all the inkers I had pretty much did a good job. I liked John Severin, because I was an old EC fan and he, along with all that crowd, had produced the best comics ever drawn. I remember that I enjoyed the micro-world of Jarella [from the famous Harlan Ellison-written *Hulk* #140]. I'm into small!

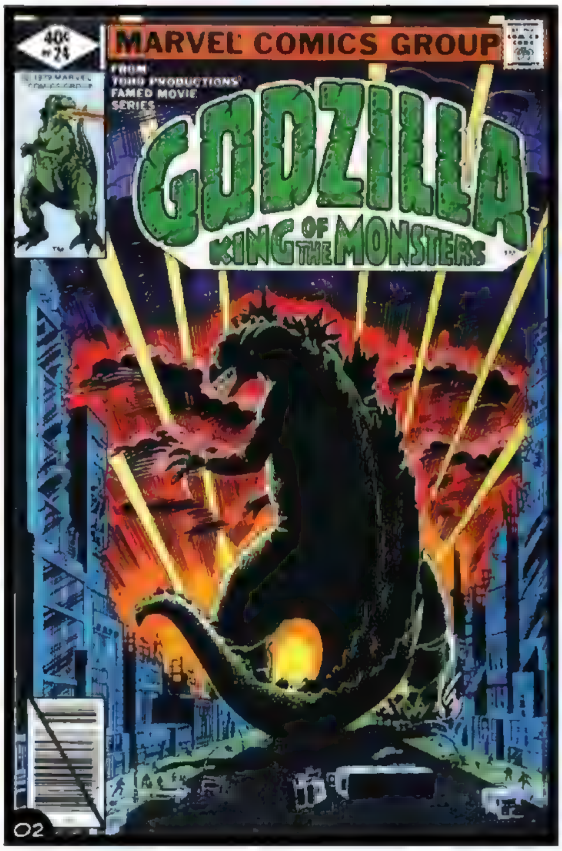
"TRY YOUR LUCK AGAINST THE WOLVERINE!"

It was during Herb's lengthy tenure as artist-in-residence on *Incredible Hulk* that a character was introduced who would become, arguably, Marvel's last great addition to its canon – the diminutive Wolverine. This whisker-masked, claw-handed, blue-booted adversary, introduced into the series initially as someone for Hulk to smash – but clearly with potential far beyond that – would develop over time into one of Marvel's most popular and lucrative characters, second only to Spider-Man.

Wolverine was slipped into the final panel of *Hulk* #180, then trumpeted on the cover of *Hulk* #181 (November 1974), making Trimpe the first artist ever to draw Wolverine for publication.

CH: Let's talk Wolverine. Can you claim any input into the creation of the character?
HT: I'd like to set the record straight on Wolverine. It was Roy Thomas and John Romita Sr who co-created the character – and by that I mean the concept, but also the visual appearance. The two worked together; I know, because I was there. But yes, I did have the privilege


THE FEVER REACHES CRITICAL PEAK--
CHOOM
TOOM
BOOM
SPASH
FOOSH
BZLAT
-AS EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES LAUNCH A LAST-DITCH ONSLAUGHT--
BUHKOOM
AGAINST THE KING OF ALL MONSTERS!
01



01 & 2 ***Godzilla* #24, 1979**

Godzilla makes one final attack on New York City, targeting the Empire State Building. Trimpe drew all but issues four and five of this 24-issue *Godzilla* run, placing him slap-bang in the centre of the Marvel U.

of bringing the character to life in the pages of *Hulk*, although none of us knew at the time what Wolverine was destined to become. I've been asked by art collectors to recreate the cover drawing for *Incredible Hulk* #181 at least a dozen times, and Wolverine is certainly, and by some way, the most requested-for sketch I get at conventions and the like.

It's been 38 years since Wolverine made his first appearance in comics and because speed was always the essence of the day – comics being produced to the most punishing of schedules – often the issue of who did what becomes clouded.

Roy Thomas (coming up soon in our *World's Finest* series of interviews) adds this on the subject: "'Created' is a word of infinite stretchability. Yes, Wolverine was my idea – I told Len Wein I wanted a character who was short, even shorter-tempered and nasty (like a real wolverine), and Canadian. That was a creative act, sure, just like Stan's few sentences to me about the origin – and name – of Man-Thing could be considered as him 'creating' the character. But Len Wein was the guy who came up with the first story, and my understanding – based on things he's said – is that he conferred with Romita on the costume and look. Even so, since Herb added to the story while drawing it, I feel Wolverine really has four creators. Len Wein might feel he has two. I don't know how John Romita felt."

CH: Another enduring Marvel element that appeared during your run was the Hulkbusters military team, still used today. A notable feature was that the Hulkbuster base, from an aerial view, looked like a giant peace symbol. Was it meant as an in-joke – or as a statement?

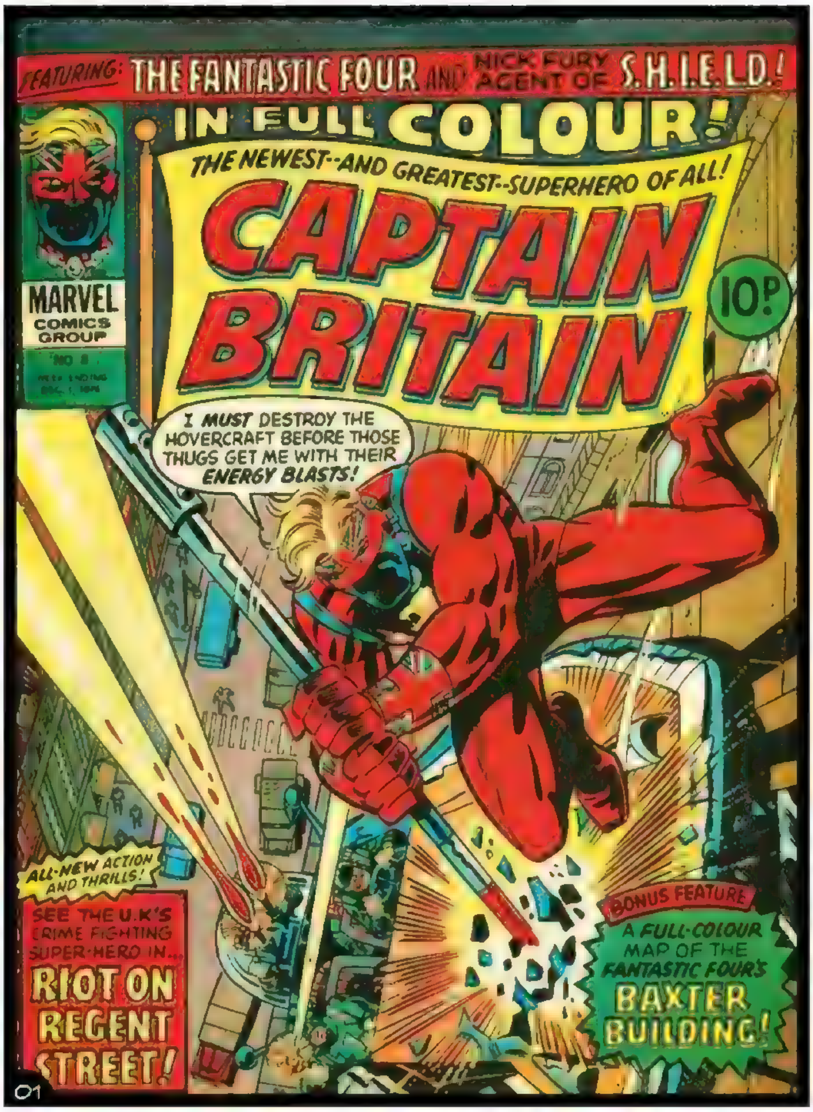
HT: It's funny you should mention that, as I had only recently realised that the Hulkbusters was, in fact, something I had wholly created: a rare thing indeed! There was no real ulterior motive behind the peace symbol thing, except maybe just to say there are two sides to the military mentality – something a lot of people don't understand. The stereotype military leader in fiction is almost always the same gruff, unbendable character. That is sometimes correct, but not most of the time. It doesn't really work that well in real life.

CH: Finally, after seven years on *Hulk*, you left the title. How did that come about, and was it by choice?

HT: We were living in Cornwall at the time, and it came on me suddenly that I just didn't want to do the title any more. I wanted to reach out to new horizons – which sounds ridiculous today, really. I informed production chief John Verpoorten via telephone, and it was fine, then – while waiting for another assignment – I plotted and pencilled an *Iron Man* story on my own. John wasn't excited about that, but it was eventually published [as *Iron Man* #93-94, 1977].

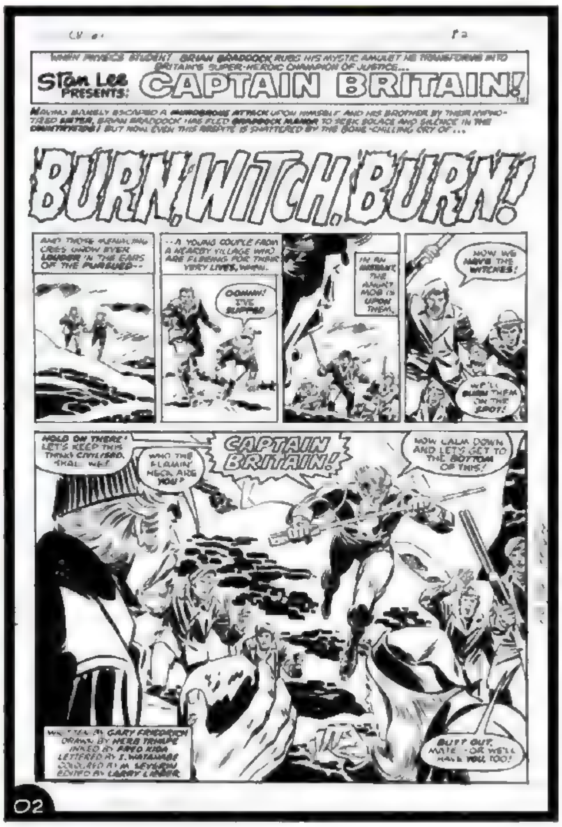
CH: Since then, in fits and starts, Hulk has gone from strength to strength. Are you up to date with all the Hulk movie appearances, for instance?

HT: Just the first one, directed by Ang Lee. Not so great for comic fans, but good for a general audience that doesn't know any better. I heard the last Hulk was the best, but I haven't seen it.


FEATURING: THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND NICK FURY AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!
IN FULL COLOUR!
THE NEWEST--AND GREATEST--SUPERHERO OF ALL!
CAPTAIN BRITAIN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
NO 8
10P
I MUST DESTROY THE HOVERCRAFT BEFORE THOSE THUGS GET ME WITH THEIR ENERGY BLASTS!
ALL-NEW ACTION AND THRILLS!
SEE THE U.K.'S CRIME FIGHTING SUPER-HERO IN... RIOT ON REGENT STREET!
BONUS FEATURE
A FULL-COLOUR MAP OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S BAXTER BUILDING!
01

01 ***Captain Britain* Vol 1 #8, 1976**

Dynamic figure work, but issues with extravagant tech are often Trimpe's most memorable.


STAN LEE PRESENTS: CAPTAIN BRITAIN!
BURN, WITCH, BURN!
AND THOSE MENACING CRIES GROW EVER LOUDER IN THE EARS OF THE PURSUED--
--A YOUNG COUPLE FROM A NEARBY VILLAGE WHO ARE FLEEING FOR THEIR VERY LIVES, WHEN...
OOHHH! I'VE SLIPPED!
IN AN INSTANT, THE ANGRY MOB IS UPON THEM.
NOW WE HAVE THE WITCHES!
WE'LL BURN THEM ON THE SPOT!
HOLD ON THERE! LET'S KEEP THIS THING CIVILISED, SHALL WE?
WHO THE FLAMIN' HECK ARE YOU?
CAPTAIN BRITAIN!
NOW CALM DOWN AND LET'S GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS!
BUTT OUT, MATE -OR WE'LL HAVE YOU TOO!
WRITTEN BY GARY FRIEDRICH
DRAWN BY HERB TRIMPE
INKED BY FRED KIDA
LETTERED BY I. WATANABE
COLOURED BY M. SEVERIN
EDITED BY LARRY LIEBER
02

02 ***Captain Britain* Vol 1 #11, 1976**

Trimpe and Claremont's all-British superhero battles a mob gone mad in 'Burn, Witch, Burn'.

> ***"I wasn't very enthusiastic about Captain Britain"***

"AN AMERICAN IN MASQUERADE!"

By the late '70s, times were tough worldwide – not least in Blighty which at the time was Trimpe's adopted home. We all needed something to cheer us up – and we got it, with the punk rock movement, while Merry Marvel, bless 'em, chipped in too. Black-and-white weekly Marvel reprints had been selling well in the UK since 1972, and the idea came up of producing a fresh superhero in the Marvel fashion that was to be all-new, uniquely ours – and in colour too! (Then rare in British comics.) This was to be Captain Britain.

Assigned to the title was writer Chris Claremont, then riding high as a result of his groundbreaking work on *Uncanny X-Men* and given the task – possibly – because he'd been born in Britain. And as for an artist? Well, who's either there right now, or at the very least freshly back off the plane with plenty of reference photographs…?

CH: Let's talk *Captain Britain*. Did Chris Claremont provide you with full scripts or a loose plot for each issue?

HT: I was working with plots from Chris. They were more elaborate than Stan would do, but definitely not full scripts – in fact, I think I was still working from plots, though by now incredibly detailed, when I left Marvel in the mid-'90s. One thing I can tell you: I wasn't very enthusiastic about *Captain Britain*. I thought it was silly, and the fans in Britain would never go for it.

It was like putting a square peg in a round hole – superheroes were so American that you guys would never fall for it! Historically – and culturally – you had too much going for you, and I thought, though I never mentioned it to anyone, that to use an American metaphor to express British heroism and steadfastness was ludicrous. I couldn't see the character in any other way except to think he was an American in masquerade.

CH: For someone so little loved, he's done surprisingly well then, hasn't he?

HT: Well, when it comes down to it, I guess I liked *Captain Britain* about as much as I did most of the titles I drew. (Usually, when a project was presented that offered money in return, I had a tendency to jump at it no matter what it was!)

I remember the lion emblem was tough to draw and get right within the confines of Cap's chest area. But being a history fan – especially of Britain during World War 2 – I was, at least, very familiar with the design. I can't actually remember if I started drawing *Captain Britain* when I was still in the UK, but I certainly used photos taken there as reference. I can remember getting together with Chris Claremont – he came down to Cornwall, and first mentioned the possibility of me drawing the book then. We were talking on a deserted, wind-swept beach – and I think he first came up with the name then, although I can't be certain.

CH: It doesn't sound like you feel he was very much your creation, then…

HT: Oh, *Captain Britain* was very much a committee book. I don't know for sure who designed the original costume for instance, but to me it looks a lot like John Romita's work. He was the guy in the NY office all the art went through, and who did corrections and everything else. And if John did it, there was never any need to add or change whatever he did. Stan Lee would have undoubtedly approved the character design.

I probably designed the look of Brian Braddock, though, and the supporting cast and many of the early villains – I definitely remember designing the villain, Hurricane, for instance. But that kind of thing we just winged at the time. I've designed many characters and villains that nobody remembers today, including me! **CH**

Though largely retired, Herb Trimpe still does commissions – "Sure I do," he says. "Gotta eat!" – available through his agent, Jeff Jaworski, at ComicArtFans.com.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

SAVE UP TO 40% WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TODAY

If you're buying every issue of *Comic Heroes* then why not subscribe? Especially now that you can save up to **40%** with our great Christmas offer. That's right. Pay only **£7.19** every three months, or **£30.99** for a whole year. It's a great treat for yourself – or maybe for someone else!

Hello there,

We went monster mad this issue (you may have noticed), but it's no one-off. *Comic Heroes* is rammed with the big beasts of the comic book world *every* issue, creators and characters both (just check out this one, heaving with everyone from Hulk to Brian Michael Bendis). Go on, subscribe; there's no better way to kick off 2013...

Matt

Matt Bielby
Editor

WHY SUBSCRIBE?

- SAVE UP TO 40%
- EVERY ISSUE DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR
- NEVER MISS AN ISSUE

WHAT YOU'LL PAY

UK £7.19 quarterly by direct debit or just £30.99 a year for 6 issues

1. Call 0844 848 2852 and quote 'COHP1L'
(Lines are open 8am-9.30pm weekdays and 8am-4pm Saturday)

2. www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/COHP1L

Closing date is 31 Jan 2013

US Save 40% a year when you subscribe to Comic Heroes! Get 6 issues a year for $68.99

1. www.comicheroesmagazine.com/northamerica

Live outside the UK?
For fantastic savings visit www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/comic-heroes

Terms and Conditions These offers are open to new subscribers only. You will receive six issues of *Comic Heroes* a year. Your subscription will begin with the next available issue. If at any time you are at all dissatisfied, notify us in writing and we will refund you all unmailed issues. US customers will be charged in US dollars. All other regions pay in GBP. Subscription gifts and covermounts are not included with digital subscriptions. This offer closes 31 January 2013.

3 AMAZING FREE
COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • MOVIES
COMIC HEROES
CATWOMAN
HEADS UP THE SEXIEST, SLINKIEST, SINNINGEST SIRENS IN COMICS
4 FANTASTIC FREE GIFTS!
2 COMICS! JUDGE DREDD & GIANT-
BIGGER! BETTER! MORE! 80 PAGES OF STRIP! • PLUS!
COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • MOVIES • TV
COMIC HEROES
KILLER HEROES ISSUE
WOLVERINE
HOW HE CHANGED COMICS
HIS FIGHTS!
HIS LOST LOVES!
HIS ORIGINS!
DREDD AGAIN

4 AMAZING FREE GIFTS!
GIANT-SIZE SIDEKICK! TALLER! WIDER! MORE PAGES!
PLUS! COMPLETE COMIC: DC'S DARK HEROES • AND! 2 FREE POSTCARDS
COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • MOVIES • TV • GAMES
COMIC HEROES
YOU AND WHOSE ARMY?
JUSTICE LEAGUE
RISE OF R-TEAMS!
KISS MY AXE!
WHAT NEXT FOR X-MEN?

LIMITED TIME OFFER!

COMIC HEROES
THE HEROIC MONSTER ISSUE

YOUR 4 FREE GIFTS
2 COMICS! LOCAL HEROES AND HUGE SAMPLER COMIC
80 PAGES OF STRIP! • PLUS 2 FREE POSTCARDS!
COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • MOVIES • TV • GAMES
COMIC HEROES
HOW HULK REDEFINED HEROES
HULK SMASH!
THE ZOMBO INTERVIEW!
PLUS: HERE BE MONSTERS! ULTIMATE CREATURE COUNTDOWN
HULK • THING • MAN THING • HEAP • SWAMP THING • DEATHLOK
THE WALKING DEAD
CREATOR ROBERT KIRKMAN: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!
BRIAN WOOD • BRIAN K VAUGHAN • GARTH ENNIS • KEVIN MACGUIRE • CHARLES BURNS • ANDY KUBERT • CLIFF CHIANG • AND HERB TRIMPE!

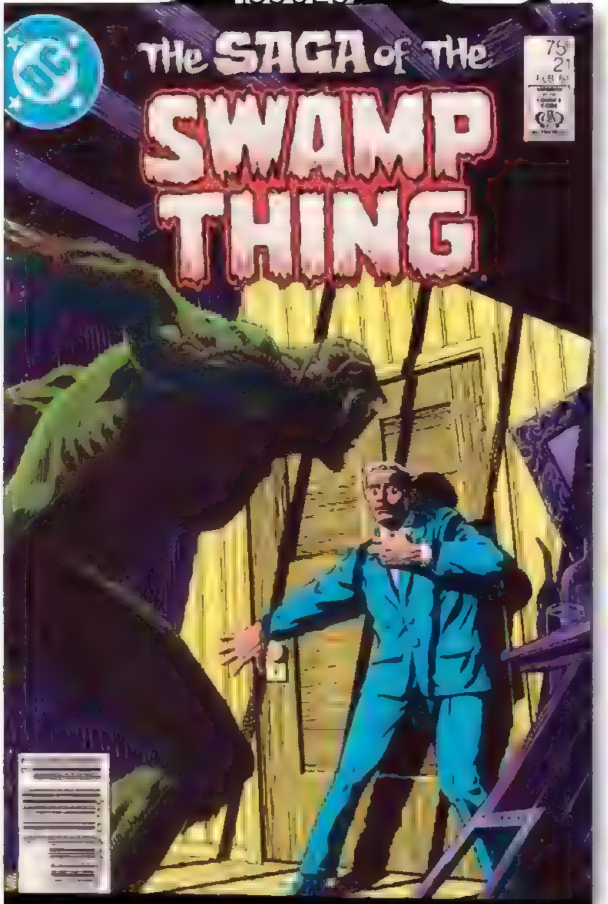
GO DIGITAL

Now available on iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch!

Download the free *Comic Heroes* app from the App Store and start building your library!

iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the US and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc.

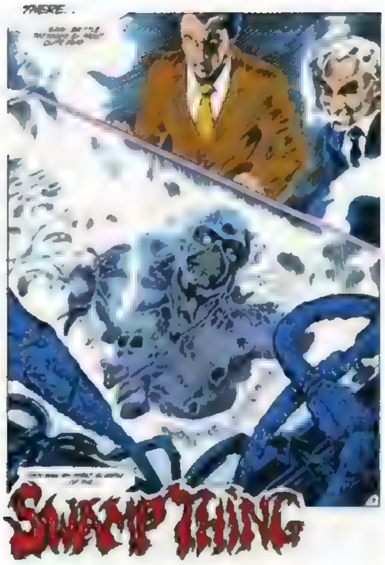
BIG ISSUES



THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #21 | **STORY** 'The Anatomy Lesson' | **BY** Alan Moore, Stephen Bissette and John Totleben | **DATE** February 1984

"It's raining in Washington tonight"

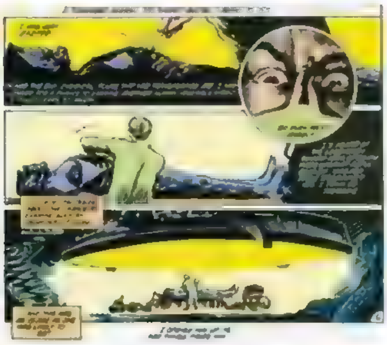
It started the '80s British invasion of the American mainstream, and reinvented horror comics. By James Lovegrove



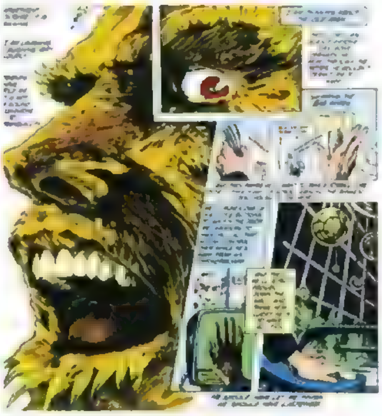
Alan Moore took over *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing* with #20, picking up where previous scripter Martin Pasko left off, mid-storyline. He spent that issue tying up loose plot threads, then spun the title off in a bold new direction. It's no understatement to say that, in so doing, he changed the face of mainstream American comics.

DC editor Len Wein had talent-spotted Moore though his *2000 AD* work, and handed him the reins on *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing* in 1983 because its sales were in the doldrums and, presumably, he reasoned that this weird, gangly British hippy writer could do little harm to a comic that was moribund already. Swamp Thing was, in fact, Wein's own creation, and the mud monster's early-'70s adventures, beautifully illustrated by Berni Wrightson and, later, Nestor Redondo, had been fun if somewhat samey – moody horror pieces that made much of the whole humanity-within-a-misunderstood-monster aspect.

With #21, entitled 'The Anatomy Lesson', Moore carefully picked apart what Wein and Pasko had built. He didn't throw out the character's entire history; this was no mere press of the reset button. Rather, with respect and intelligence, he took everything that had been established about Swamp Thing and turned it on its head. Up until now, the concept had been that Swamp Thing was a scientist, Alec Holland, who had been developing a 'bio-restorative formula' in the Louisiana swamps. A saboteur's bomb destroyed his lab, and would have killed Holland too but for his experimental chemical compounds, which *somehow* combined with the marshy vegetation to resurrect him as a shambling, sentient bog creature.



What Moore proposed instead was that the plants in the swamp ingested the dead matter of Holland's burned corpse and then, altered by the bio-restorative formula, did their best to recreate his human form. To quote Dr Jason Woodrue, aka the Floronic Man, who has been employed to dissect the seemingly deceased Swamp Thing: "We thought that the Swamp Thing was Alec Holland, somehow transformed into a plant. It wasn't. It was a plant that *thought* it was Alec Holland! A plant that was trying its level best to be Alec Holland." This seems to echo the Chinese philosopher Zuangzi's famous paradox: "Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man."



At a stroke, Moore set up the themes he would explore during the subsequent 40 issues: ecology, spirituality, plant psychedelia, ugly capitalism, and a welter of quintessentially American horror tropes. At the same time he paved the way for the creation of an enduring mature-readers imprint – Vertigo – and often radical revamps of established but neglected DC characters.

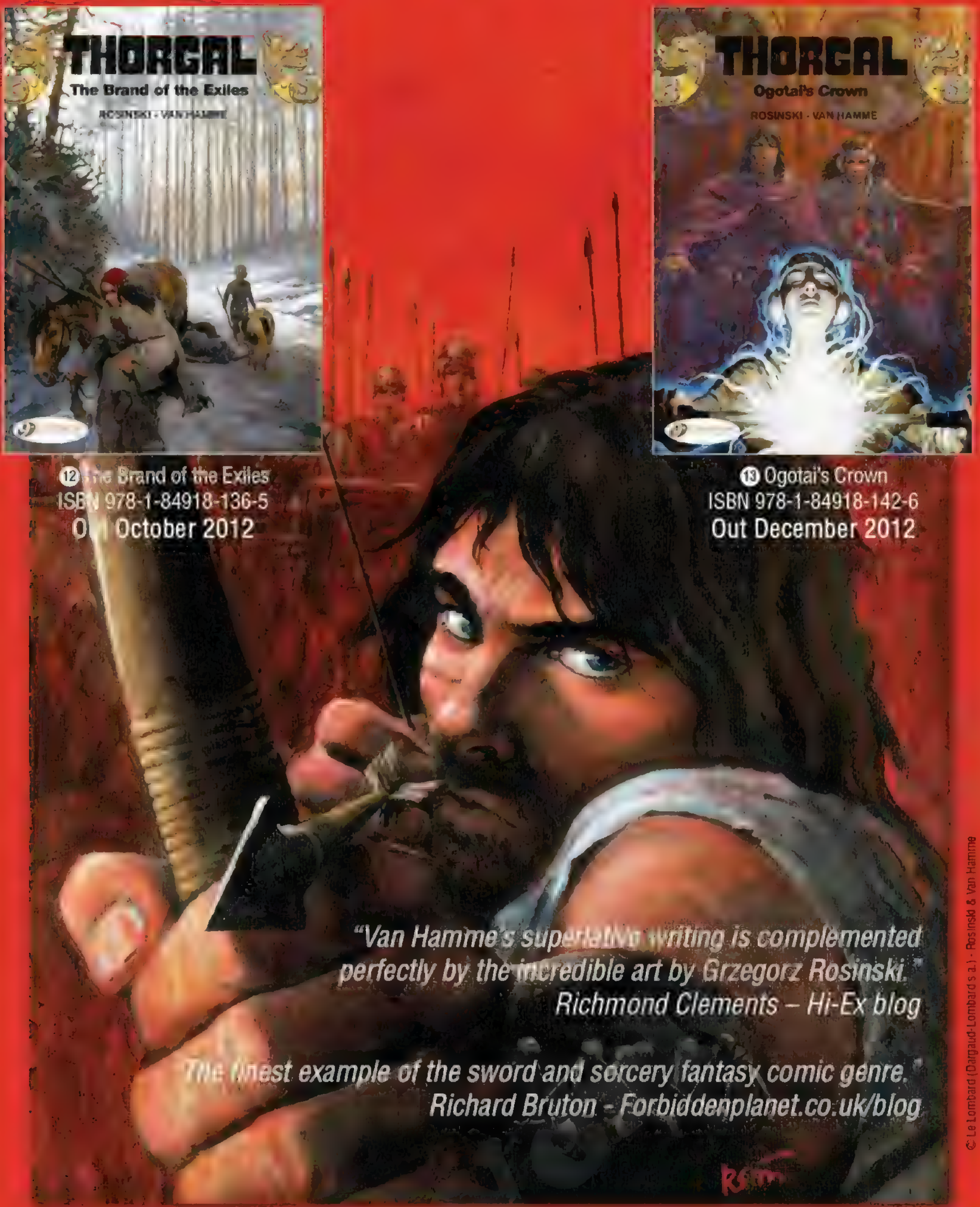
One of the other joys of 'The Anatomy Lesson' is seeing Bissette and Totleben really come into their own. Their fluid, knotty illustrative style would continue to complement Moore's literate scripts perfectly. Nothing since has approached the creepy, organic brilliance of *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing* #21 and successive issues; here, Moore demonstrated exactly what a comic was capable of, and inspired a generation of creators to up their game.

He himself is typically modest. "*Swamp Thing* isn't a typical horror story, nor is it a superhero book," he writes in the first Titan Books reprint collection. "It's a mutant. A hybrid. A funny-looking kid. As a parent, however, I'm afraid I can't help but love him." As readers, admirers, fans, we ourselves can do no less.

Assorted collections, including ***The Saga Of The Swamp Thing Vol 1***.

THORGAL

the gods have put a man to the test


THORGAL
The Brand of the Exiles
ROSINSKI · VAN HAMME
THORGAL
Ogotai's Crown
ROSINSKI · VAN HAMME

⑫ The Brand of the Exiles
ISBN 978-1-84918-136-5
Out October 2012

⑬ Ogotai's Crown
ISBN 978-1-84918-142-6
Out December 2012

"Van Hamme's superlative writing is complemented perfectly by the incredible art by Grzegorz Rosinski."
Richmond Clements – Hi-Ex blog

"The finest example of the sword and sorcery fantasy comic genre."
Richard Bruton - Forbiddenplanet.co.uk/blog

Thorgal, the fantastic saga of a legendary hero on www.cinebook.com

© Le Lombard (Dargaud-Lombard s.a.) - Rosinski & Van Hamme

Available on the App Store

REBELLION.CO.UK/JUDGEDREDDVSZOMBIES

DREDD VS ZOMBIES

YOU ARE THE LAW!

Take control of the most famous Judge of all - it's time to protect Mega-City One from a zombie invasion!

Empowered to arrest, judge and execute, arm yourself with a Lawgiver pistol and three other devastating, upgradable weapons. Fight four deadly zombie archetypes over thirty levels. Choose from seven special upgrades to give you an edge over waves of attacking undead.

Earn stars and commendations based on performance. Ensure your Law meter is kept to maximum at all times by eliminating zombies, collecting shields and avoiding damage. When the going gets tough, upgrade your Lawgiver or try the Spitgun, Scattergun or Hi-Ex Launcher.

JUDGE DREDD VS ZOMBIES FEATURES:

Simple to learn and use Single-Stick controls

Four upgradable weapons

Seven equipment upgrades: from Body Armour to Iron Will each gives a different combat advantage

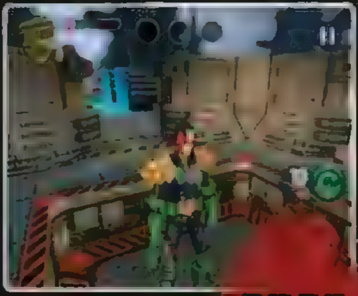
Three episodes and thirty levels of gameplay, with high replayability

Star and commendation system reward skilled gameplay: are you good enough to earn a commendation?

Game Centre support with 16 achievements to collect!

Universal App: supports iPad and iPhone/iPod Touch

Compatible with iOS version 4.2+



FREE TO PLAY

SCAN THESE CODES TO GET THE GAME!

IOS (APPLE)

ANDROID

NEW CONTENT • NEW ARENAS • DAILY CRIME SWEEPS • BACK-UP FROM PSI-DIVISION!

ZOMBIE HQ

The ZOMBIE INFESTATION in the city is seriously getting in the way of your down time. Take back your city and reclaim what is yours!

The acclaimed zombie arcade shooter for iPad and iPhone that gives you:

NEW female zombie killer!

BIGGER AND BADDER GUNS, explosives, and other zombie-killing weapons!

RESCUE SURVIVORS from the zombie horde!

BONUS REWARDS!

"a surprising and delicious package to unwrap... 4.5/5 stars"
148Apps

"should leave even the most over-saturated fans of the undead genre feeling very happy indeed."
Modojo

SCAN THIS CODE TO GET THE GAME!

IOS (APPLE)

GIANT-SIZE SIDEKICK

ISSUE
No.3
J/F
2013
FREE WITH
COMIC HEROES
ISSUE 16

THE BEST NEW COMICS PREVIEWED INSIDE!

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
SELF
MADE
HERO
SELFMADEHERO.COM

52 PAGES OF SAVAGE COMICS!

GREAT WHITE!

SHAKO

BY MILLS, WAGNER,
SOLA & ARANCIO

HIT-GIRL
THERE WILL
BE BLOOD...

Plus
JOHNNY
RED
AUGUST
MOON

GIANT-SIZE SIDEKICK

#3 January/February 2013

Inside this issue...

THE CLAWS! UUUGH!
03

Shako

By: Pat Mills, John Wagner, Ramon Sola & Juan Arancio
From: Shako
© 2012 Rebellion A/S
Out now / www.2000adonline.com

Hit-Girl

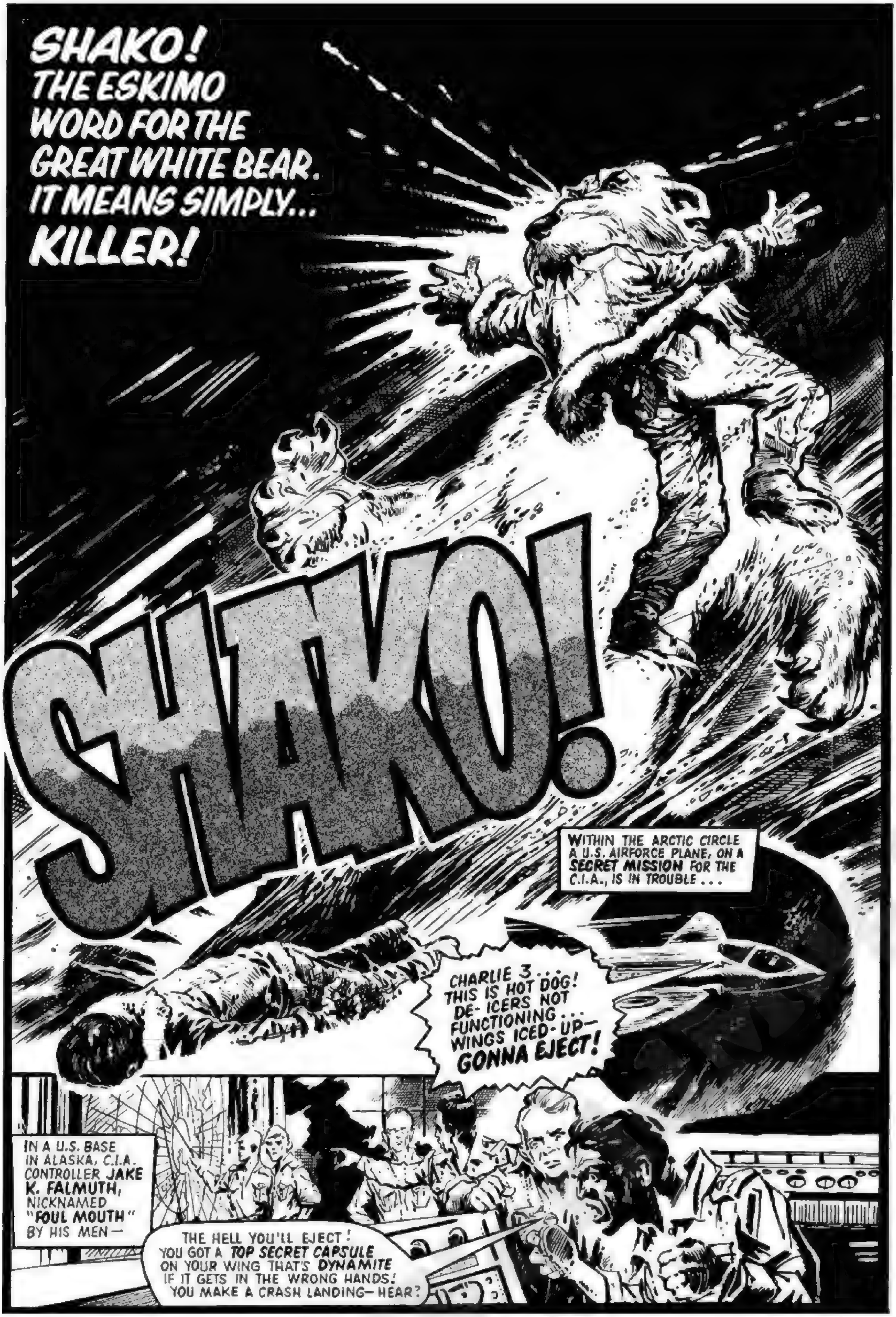
By: Mark Millar & John Romita Jr
From: Hit-Girl
© Mark Millar
Out now / www.titanbooks.com

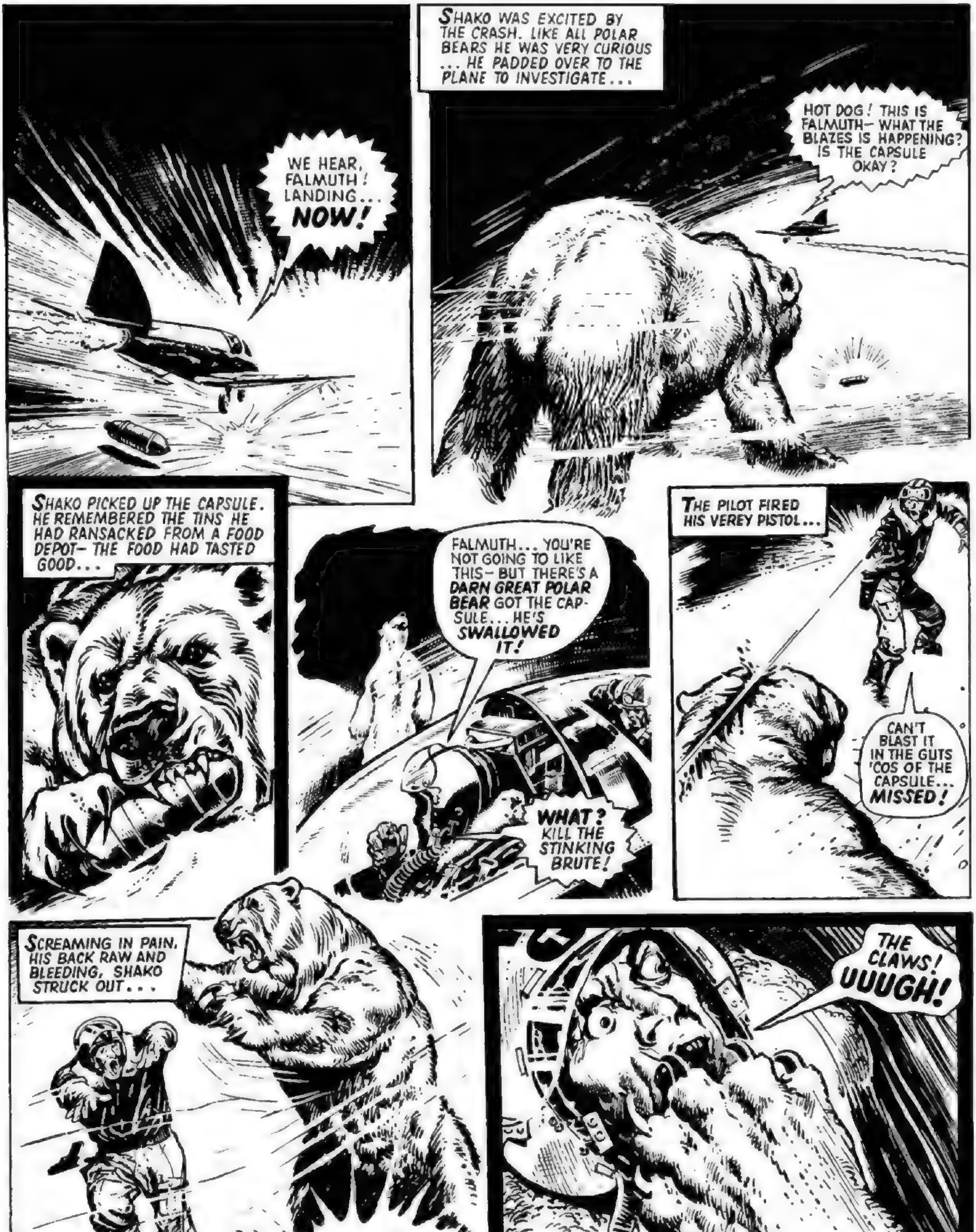
Johnny Red

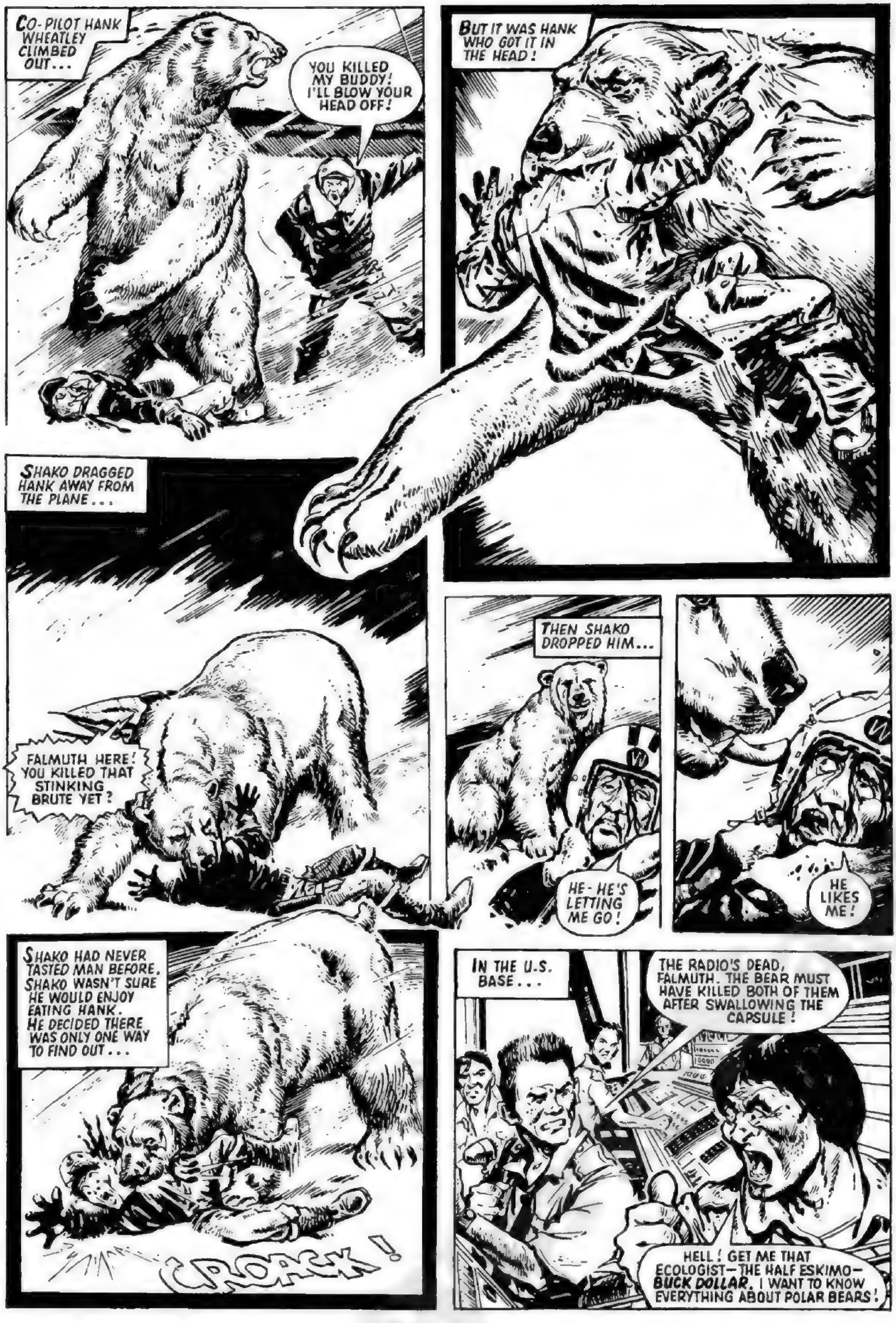
By: Tom Tully & Joe Colquhoun
From: Johnny Red: Falcon's First Flight
© egmont
Out now / www.titanbooks.com

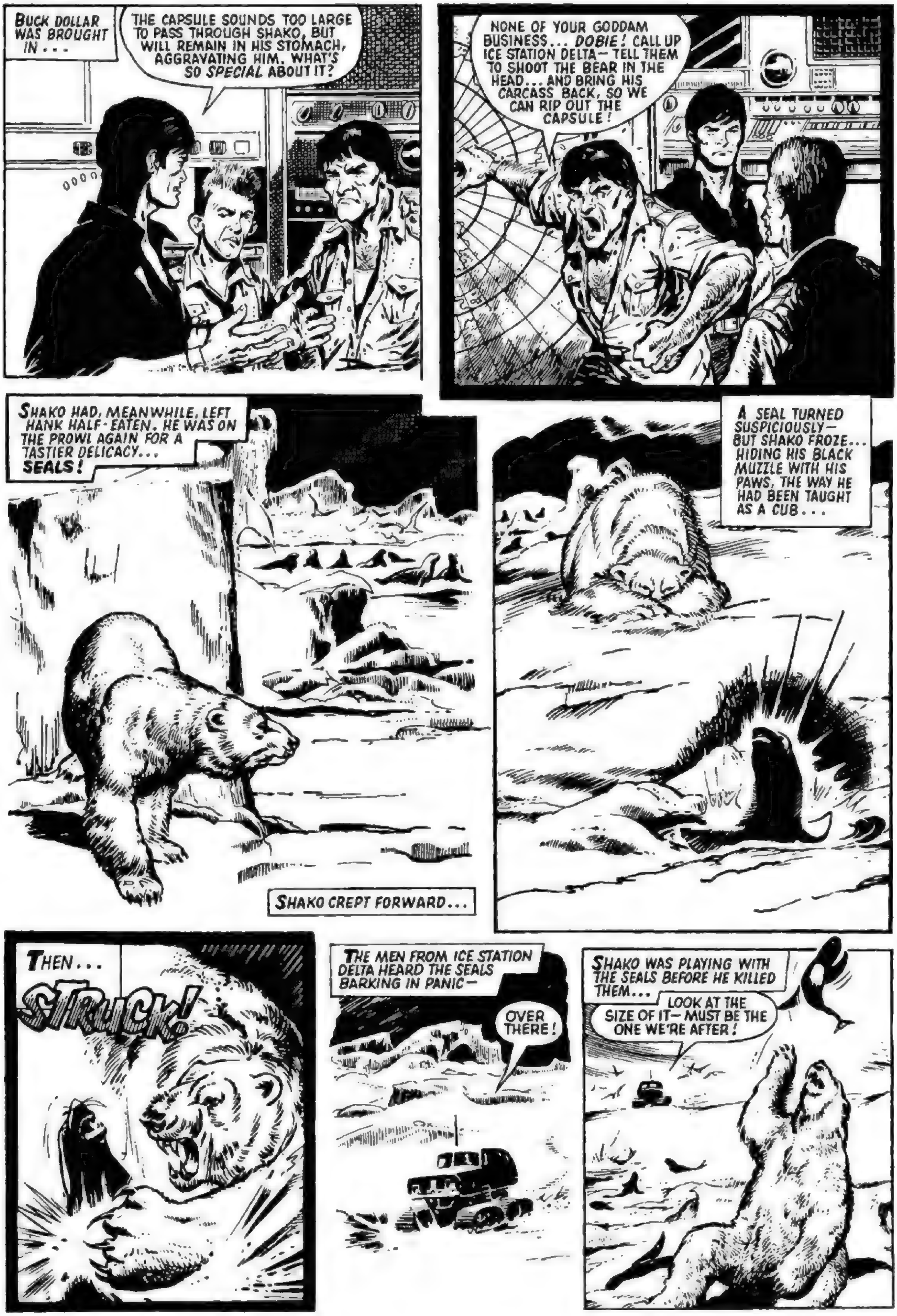
August Moon

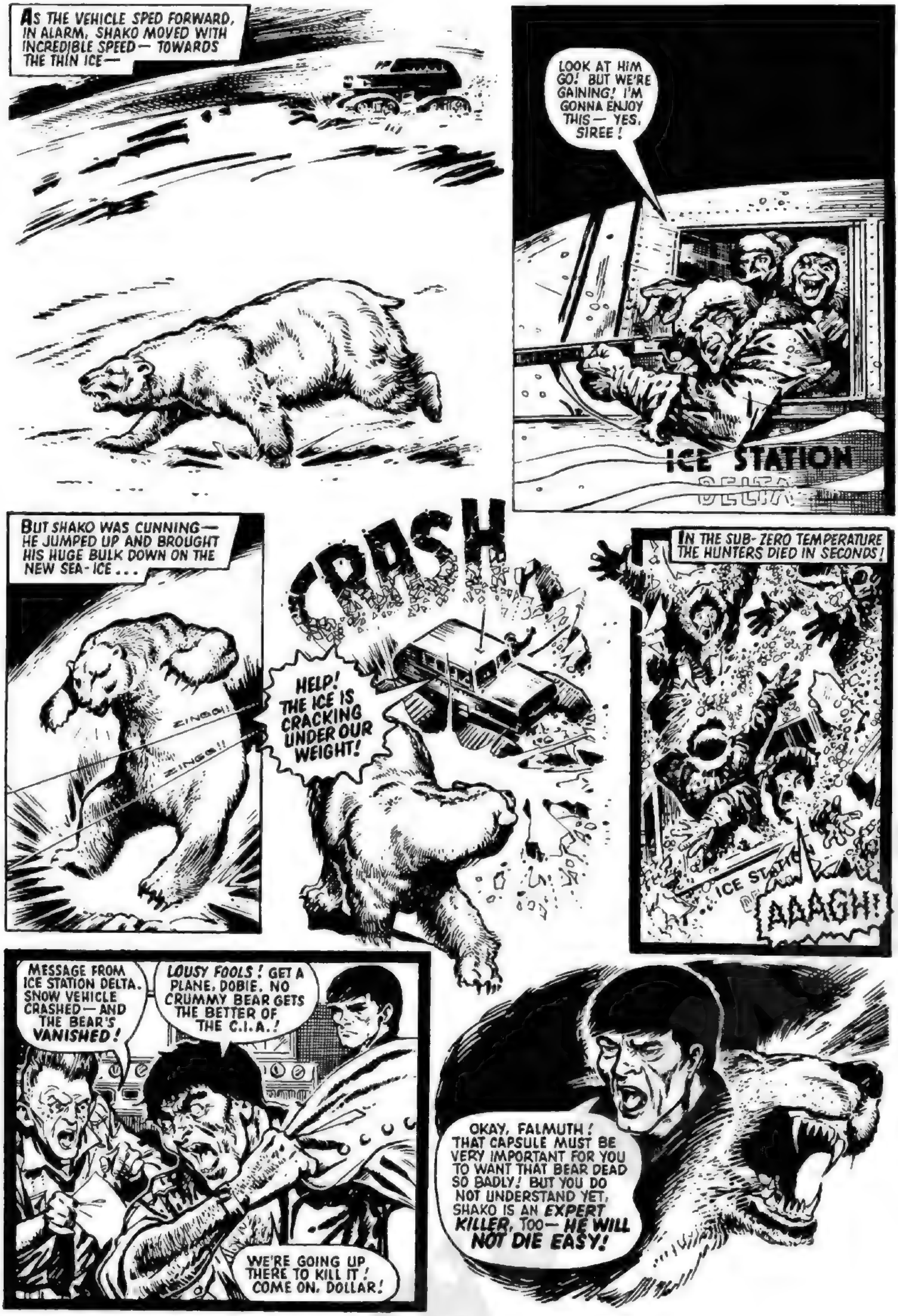
By: Diana Thung
From: August Moon
© Diana Thung
Out now / www.topshelfcomix.com

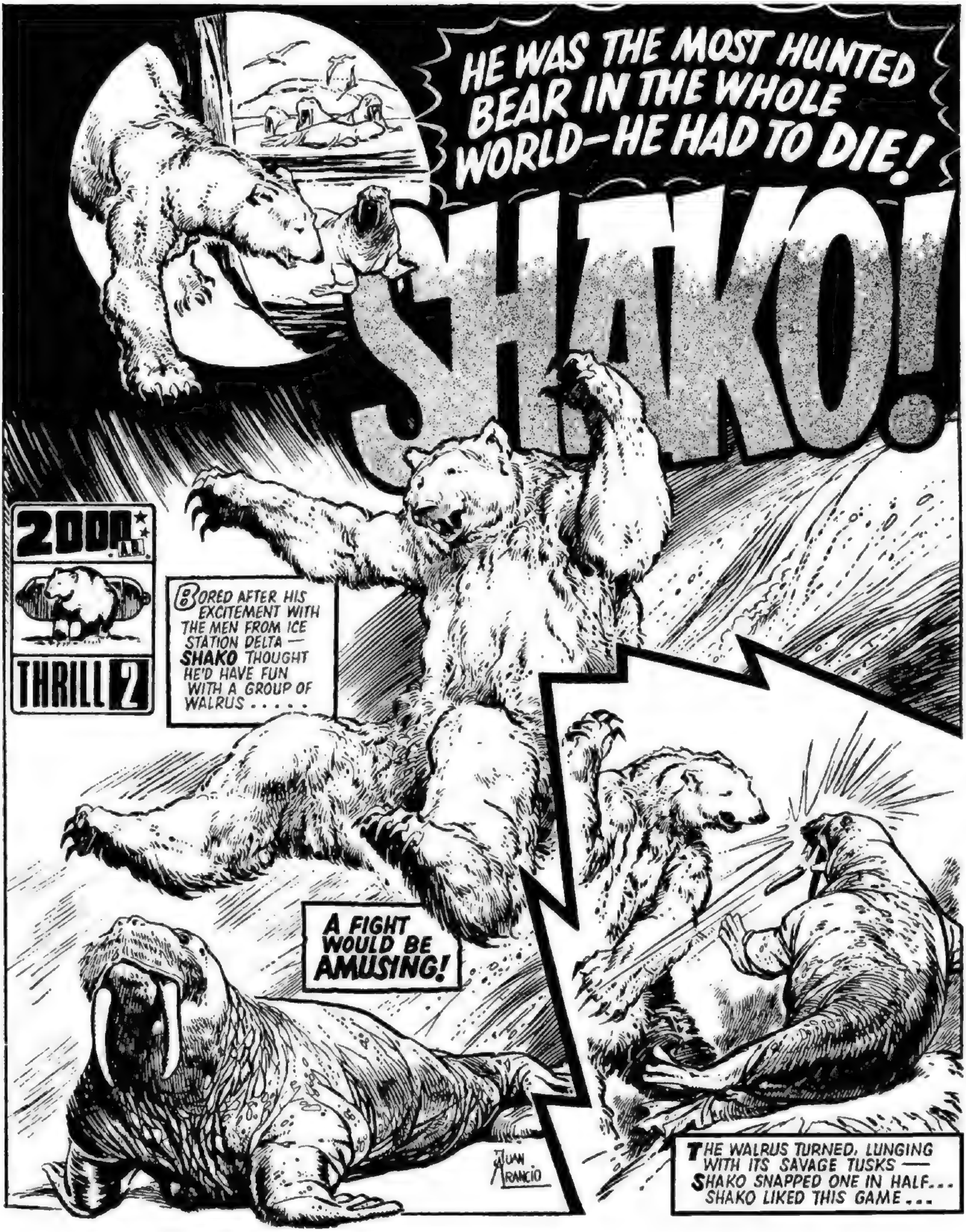

SHAKO! THE ESKIMO WORD FOR THE GREAT WHITE BEAR. IT MEANS SIMPLY... KILLER!
SHAKO!
WITHIN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE A U.S. AIRFORCE PLANE, ON A SECRET MISSION FOR THE C.I.A., IS IN TROUBLE . . .
CHARLIE 3 . . . THIS IS HOT DOG! DE- ICERS NOT FUNCTIONING . . . WINGS ICED-UP- GONNA EJECT!
IN A U.S. BASE IN ALASKA, C.I.A. CONTROLLER JAKE K. FALMUTH, NICKNAMED "FOUL MOUTH" BY HIS MEN—
THE HELL YOU'LL EJECT! YOU GOT A TOP SECRET CAPSULE ON YOUR WING THAT'S DYNAMITE IF IT GETS IN THE WRONG HANDS! YOU MAKE A CRASH LANDING— HEAR?

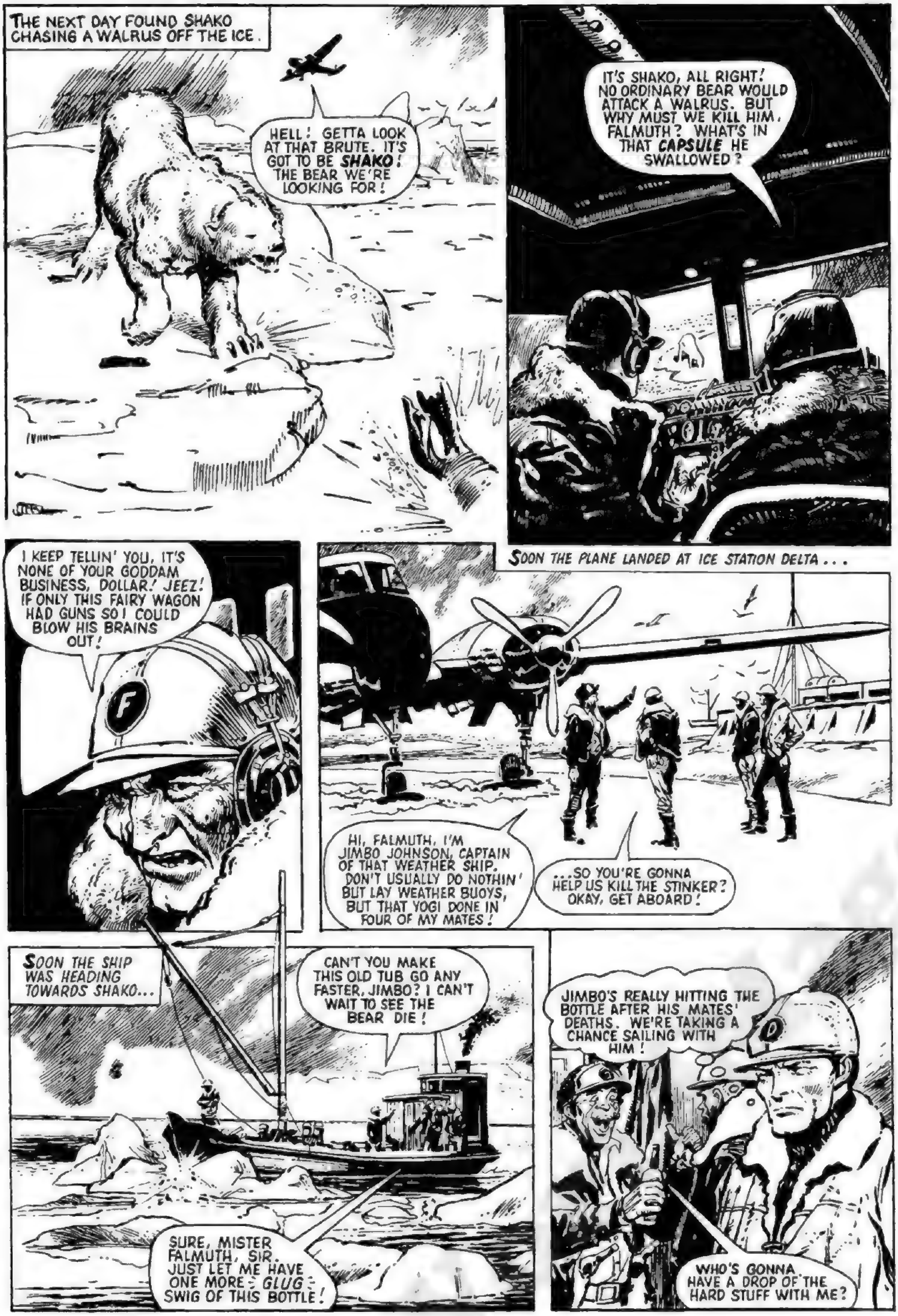

WE HEAR, FALMUTH! LANDING... NOW!
SHAKO WAS EXCITED BY THE CRASH. LIKE ALL POLAR BEARS HE WAS VERY CURIOUS ... HE PADDED OVER TO THE PLANE TO INVESTIGATE...
HOT DOG! THIS IS FALMUTH— WHAT THE BLAZES IS HAPPENING? IS THE CAPSULE OKAY?
SHAKO PICKED UP THE CAPSULE. HE REMEMBERED THE TINS HE HAD RANSACKED FROM A FOOD DEPOT— THE FOOD HAD TASTED GOOD...
FALMUTH... YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS— BUT THERE'S A DARN GREAT POLAR BEAR GOT THE CAPSULE... HE'S SWALLOWED IT!
WHAT? KILL THE STINKING BRUTE!
THE PILOT FIRED HIS VEREY PISTOL...
CAN'T BLAST IT IN THE GUTS 'COS OF THE CAPSULE... MISSED!
SCREAMING IN PAIN, HIS BACK RAW AND BLEEDING, SHAKO STRUCK OUT...
THE CLAWS! UUUGH!

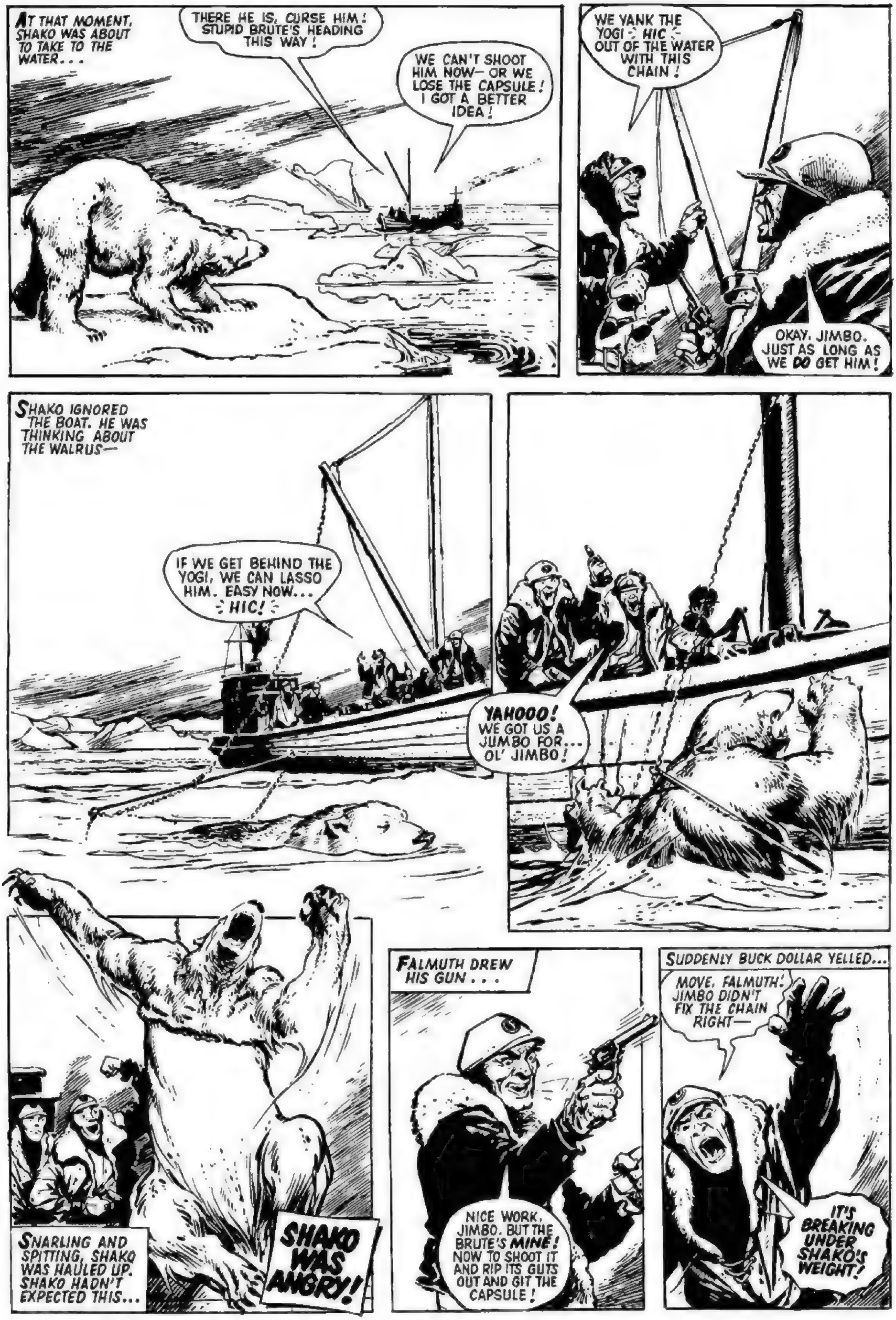

CO-PILOT HANK WHEATLEY CLIMBED OUT...
YOU KILLED MY BUDDY! I'LL BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF!
BUT IT WAS HANK WHO GOT IT IN THE HEAD!
SHAKO DRAGGED HANK AWAY FROM THE PLANE...
FALMUTH HERE! YOU KILLED THAT STINKING BRUTE YET?
THEN SHAKO DROPPED HIM...
HE- HE'S LETTING ME GO!
HE LIKES ME!
SHAKO HAD NEVER TASTED MAN BEFORE. SHAKO WASN'T SURE HE WOULD ENJOY EATING HANK. HE DECIDED THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...
CRACK!
IN THE U.S. BASE...
THE RADIO'S DEAD, FALMUTH. THE BEAR MUST HAVE KILLED BOTH OF THEM AFTER SWALLOWING THE CAPSULE!
HELL! GET ME THAT ECOLOGIST—THE HALF ESKIMO— BUCK DOLLAR. I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT POLAR BEARS!

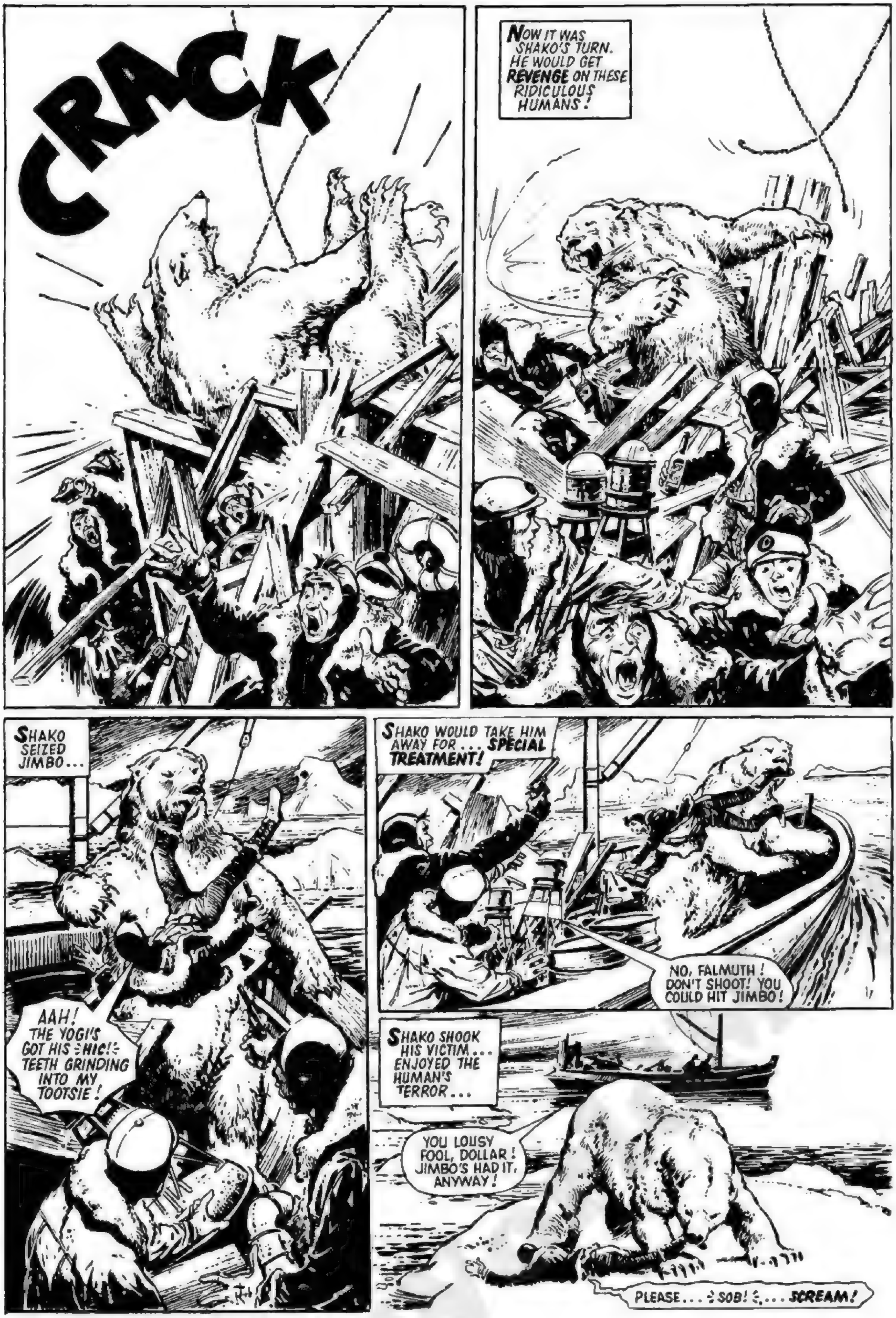

BUCK DOLLAR WAS BROUGHT IN...
THE CAPSULE SOUNDS TOO LARGE TO PASS THROUGH SHAKO, BUT WILL REMAIN IN HIS STOMACH, AGGRAVATING HIM. WHAT'S SO *SPECIAL* ABOUT IT?
NONE OF YOUR GODDAM BUSINESS... *DOBIE!* CALL UP ICE STATION DELTA— TELL THEM TO SHOOT THE BEAR IN THE HEAD... AND BRING HIS CARCASS BACK, SO WE CAN RIP OUT THE CAPSULE!
SHAKO HAD, MEANWHILE, LEFT HANK HALF-EATEN. HE WAS ON THE PROWL AGAIN FOR A TASTIER DELICACY... **SEALS!**
SHAKO CREPT FORWARD...
A SEAL TURNED SUSPICIOUSLY— BUT SHAKO FROZE... HIDING HIS BLACK MUZZLE WITH HIS PAWS, THE WAY HE HAD BEEN TAUGHT AS A CUB...
THEN...
STRUCK!
THE MEN FROM ICE STATION DELTA HEARD THE SEALS BARKING IN PANIC—
OVER THERE!
SHAKO WAS PLAYING WITH THE SEALS BEFORE HE KILLED THEM...
LOOK AT THE SIZE OF IT— MUST BE THE ONE WE'RE AFTER!

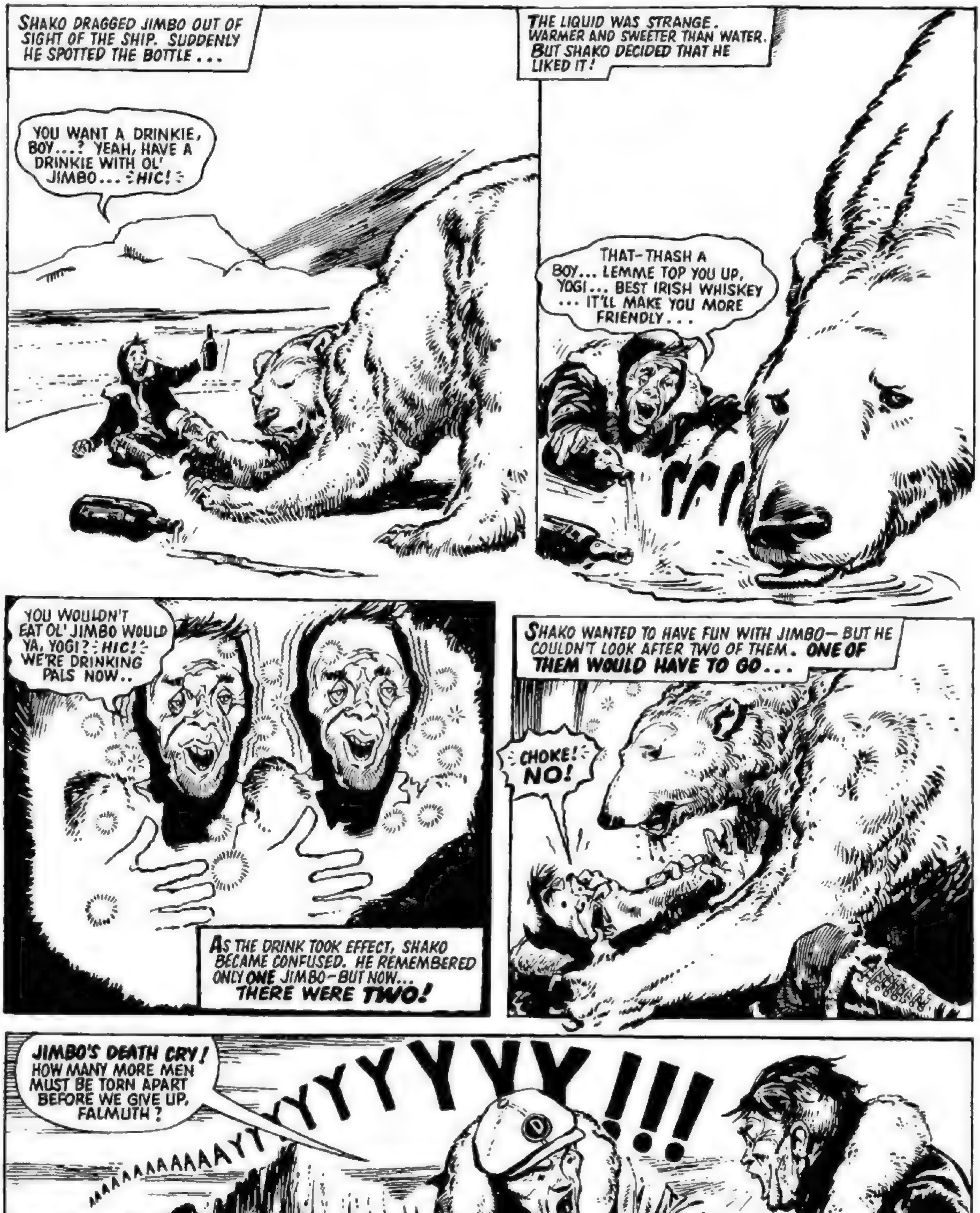

AS THE VEHICLE SPED FORWARD, IN ALARM, SHAKO MOVED WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED— TOWARDS THE THIN ICE—
LOOK AT HIM GO! BUT WE'RE GAINING! I'M GONNA ENJOY THIS— YES, SIREE!
ICE STATION DELTA
BUT SHAKO WAS CUNNING— HE JUMPED UP AND BROUGHT HIS HUGE BULK DOWN ON THE NEW SEA-ICE...
ZINGG!!
ZINGG!!
CRASH
HELP! THE ICE IS CRACKING UNDER OUR WEIGHT!
IN THE SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURE THE HUNTERS DIED IN SECONDS!
ICE STATION
AAAGH!
MESSAGE FROM ICE STATION DELTA. SNOW VEHICLE CRASHED— AND THE BEAR'S VANISHED!
LOUSY FOOLS! GET A PLANE, DOBIE. NO CRUMMY BEAR GETS THE BETTER OF THE C.I.A.!
WE'RE GOING UP THERE TO KILL IT! COME ON, DOLLAR!
OKAY, FALMUTH! THAT CAPSULE MUST BE VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO WANT THAT BEAR DEAD SO BADLY! BUT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND YET. SHAKO IS AN EXPERT KILLER, TOO— HE WILL NOT DIE EASY!

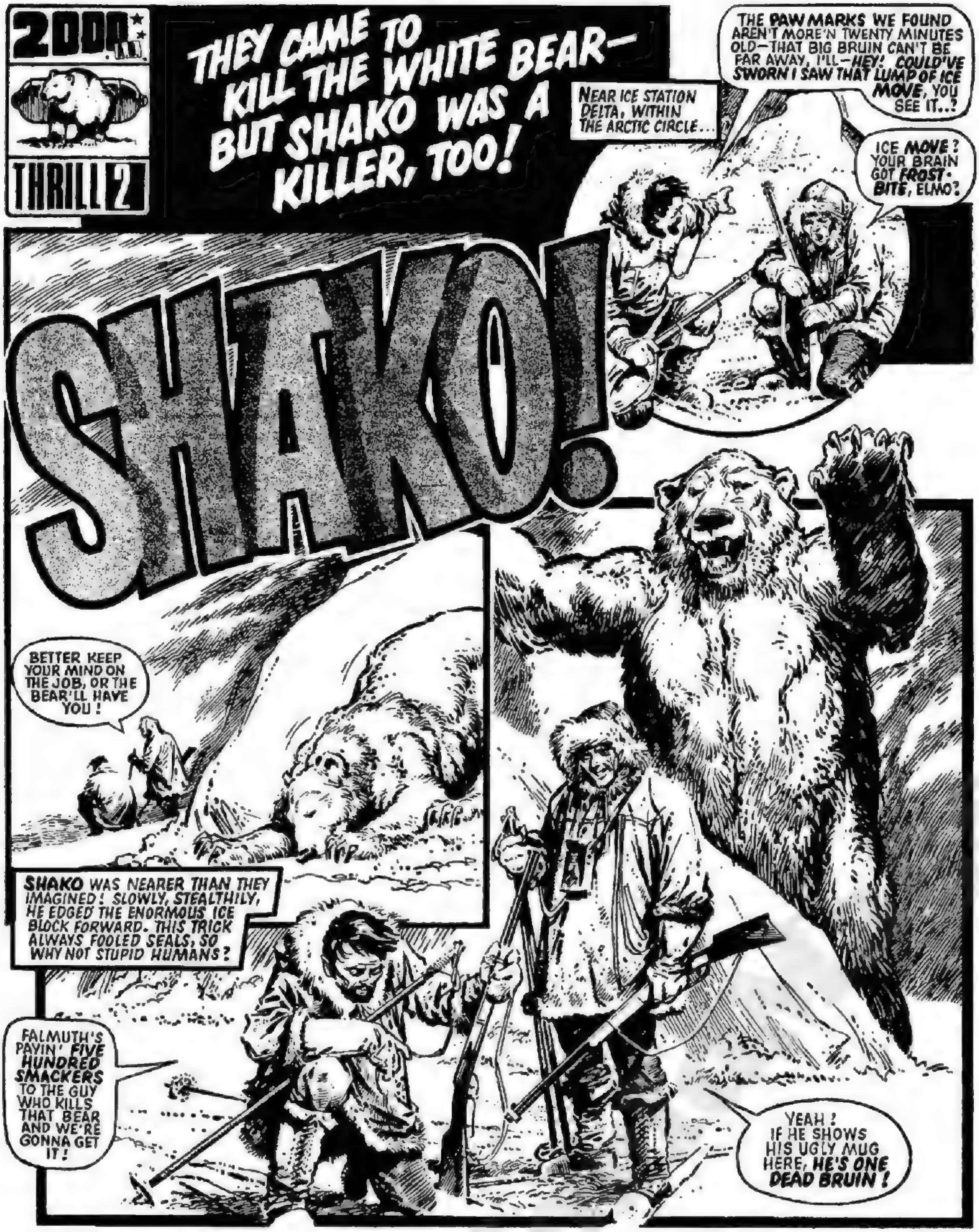

HE WAS THE MOST HUNTED BEAR IN THE WHOLE WORLD—HE HAD TO DIE!
SHAKO!
2000 A.D.
THRILL 2
BORED AFTER HIS EXCITEMENT WITH THE MEN FROM ICE STATION DELTA — SHAKO THOUGHT HE'D HAVE FUN WITH A GROUP OF WALRUS . . . . .
A FIGHT WOULD BE AMUSING!
JUAN ARANCIO
THE WALRUS TURNED, LUNGING WITH ITS SAVAGE TUSKS — SHAKO SNAPPED ONE IN HALF... SHAKO LIKED THIS GAME...

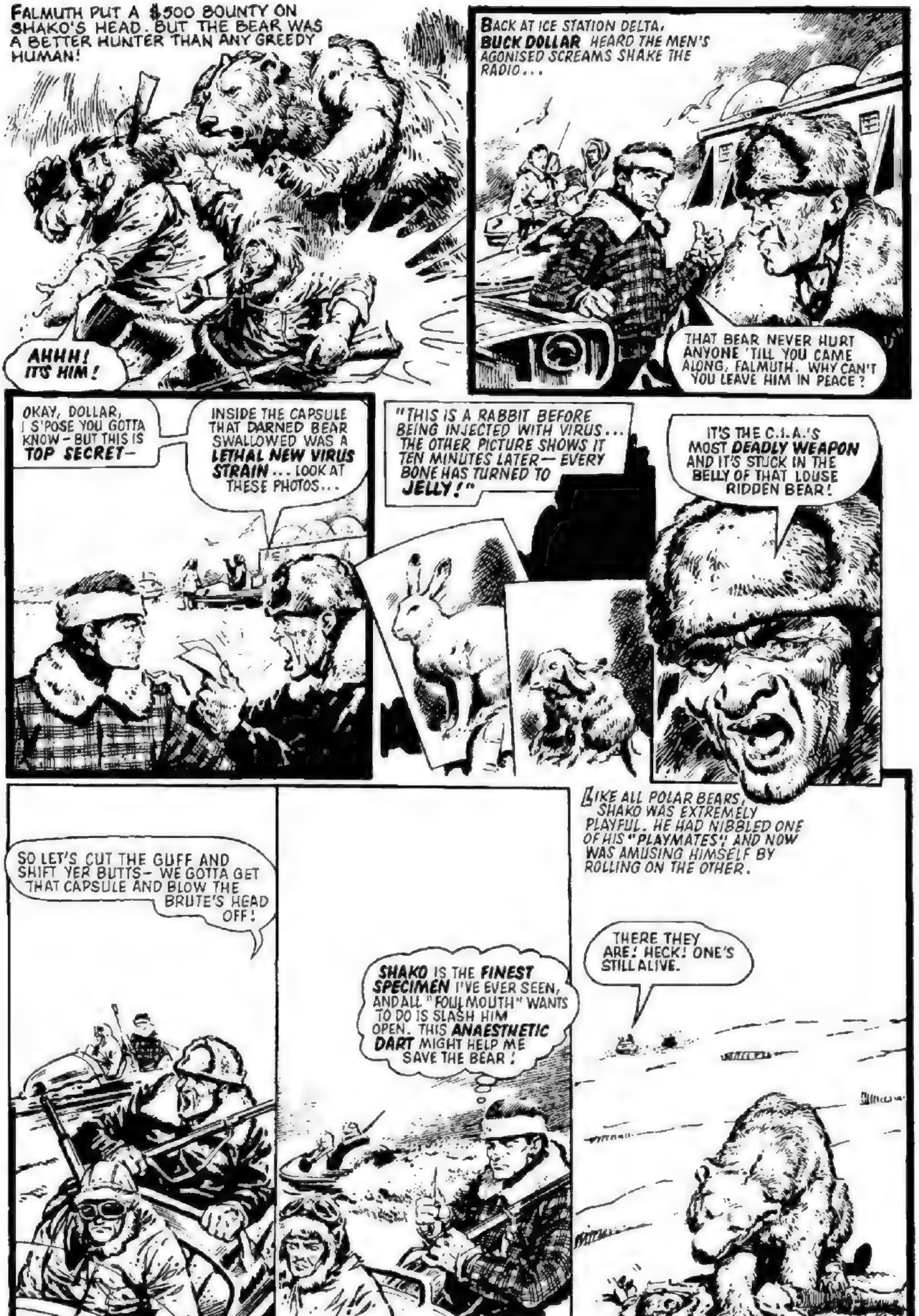

THE NEXT DAY FOUND SHAKO CHASING A WALRUS OFF THE ICE.
HELL! GETTA LOOK AT THAT BRUTE. IT'S GOT TO BE SHAKO! THE BEAR WE'RE LOOKING FOR!
IT'S SHAKO, ALL RIGHT! NO ORDINARY BEAR WOULD ATTACK A WALRUS. BUT WHY MUST WE KILL HIM, FALMUTH? WHAT'S IN THAT CAPSULE HE SWALLOWED?
I KEEP TELLIN' YOU, IT'S NONE OF YOUR GODDAM BUSINESS, DOLLAR! JEEZ! IF ONLY THIS FAIRY WAGON HAD GUNS SO I COULD BLOW HIS BRAINS OUT!
F
SOON THE PLANE LANDED AT ICE STATION DELTA...
HI, FALMUTH, I'M JIMBO JOHNSON, CAPTAIN OF THAT WEATHER SHIP. DON'T USUALLY DO NOTHIN' BUT LAY WEATHER BUOYS, BUT THAT YOGI DONE IN FOUR OF MY MATES!
...SO YOU'RE GONNA HELP US KILL THE STINKER? OKAY, GET ABOARD!
SOON THE SHIP WAS HEADING TOWARDS SHAKO...
CAN'T YOU MAKE THIS OLD TUB GO ANY FASTER, JIMBO? I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE BEAR DIE!
SURE, MISTER FALMUTH, SIR. JUST LET ME HAVE ONE MORE - GLUG - SWIG OF THIS BOTTLE!
JIMBO'S REALLY HITTING THE BOTTLE AFTER HIS MATES' DEATHS. WE'RE TAKING A CHANCE SAILING WITH HIM!
D
WHO'S GONNA HAVE A DROP OF THE HARD STUFF WITH ME?

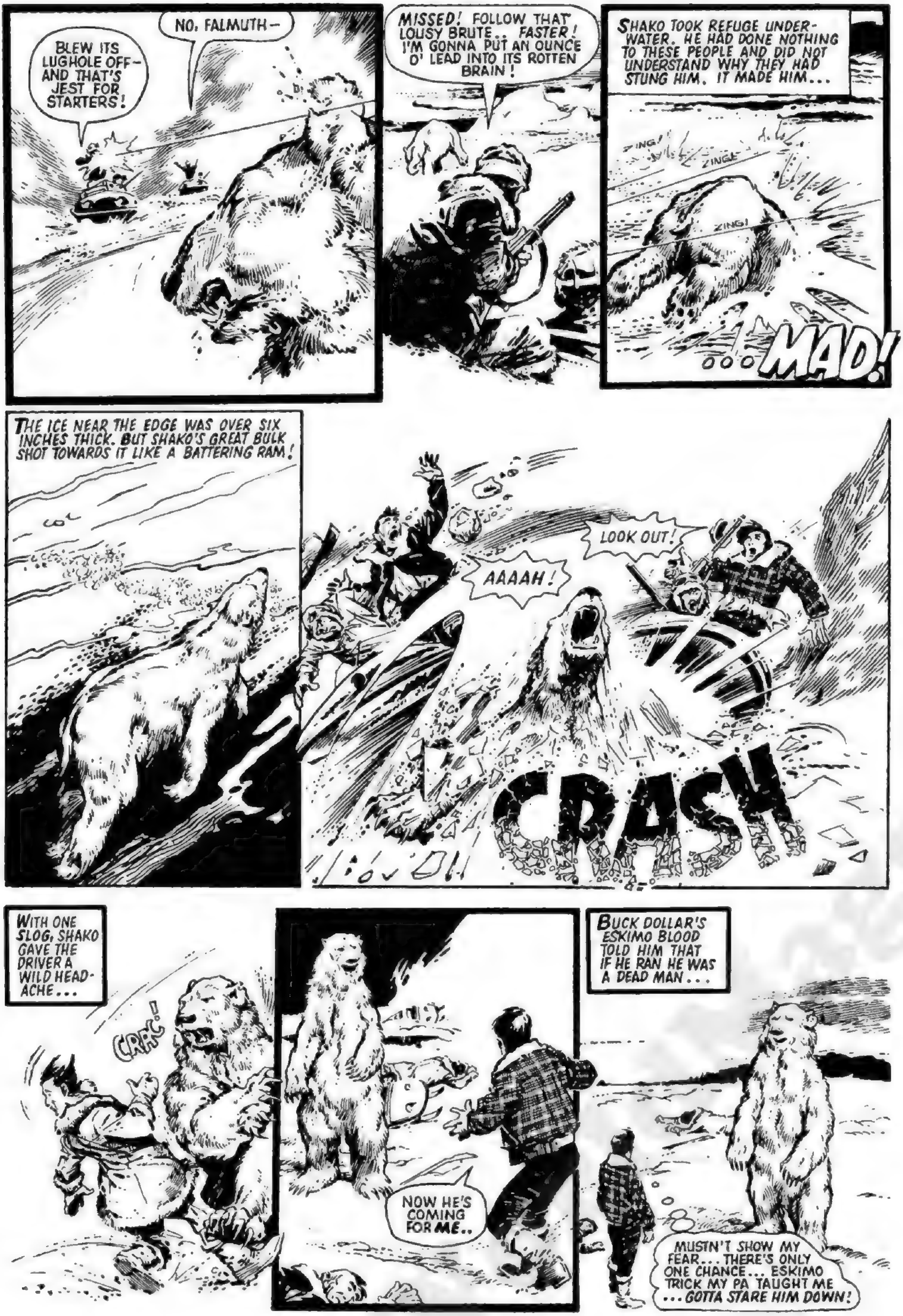

AT THAT MOMENT, SHAKO WAS ABOUT TO TAKE TO THE WATER...
THERE HE IS, CURSE HIM! STUPID BRUTE'S HEADING THIS WAY!
WE CAN'T SHOOT HIM NOW– OR WE LOSE THE CAPSULE! I GOT A BETTER IDEA!
WE YANK THE YOGI – HIC – OUT OF THE WATER WITH THIS CHAIN!
OKAY, JIMBO. JUST AS LONG AS WE DO GET HIM!
SHAKO IGNORED THE BOAT. HE WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WALRUS–
IF WE GET BEHIND THE YOGI, WE CAN LASSO HIM. EASY NOW... HIC!
YAHOOO! WE GOT US A JUMBO FOR... OL' JIMBO!
SNARLING AND SPITTING, SHAKO WAS HAULED UP. SHAKO HADN'T EXPECTED THIS...
SHAKO WAS ANGRY!
FALMUTH DREW HIS GUN...
NICE WORK, JIMBO. BUT THE BRUTE'S MINE! NOW TO SHOOT IT AND RIP ITS GUTS OUT AND GIT THE CAPSULE!
SUDDENLY BUCK DOLLAR YELLED...
MOVE, FALMUTH! JIMBO DIDN'T FIX THE CHAIN RIGHT–
IT'S BREAKING UNDER SHAKO'S WEIGHT!

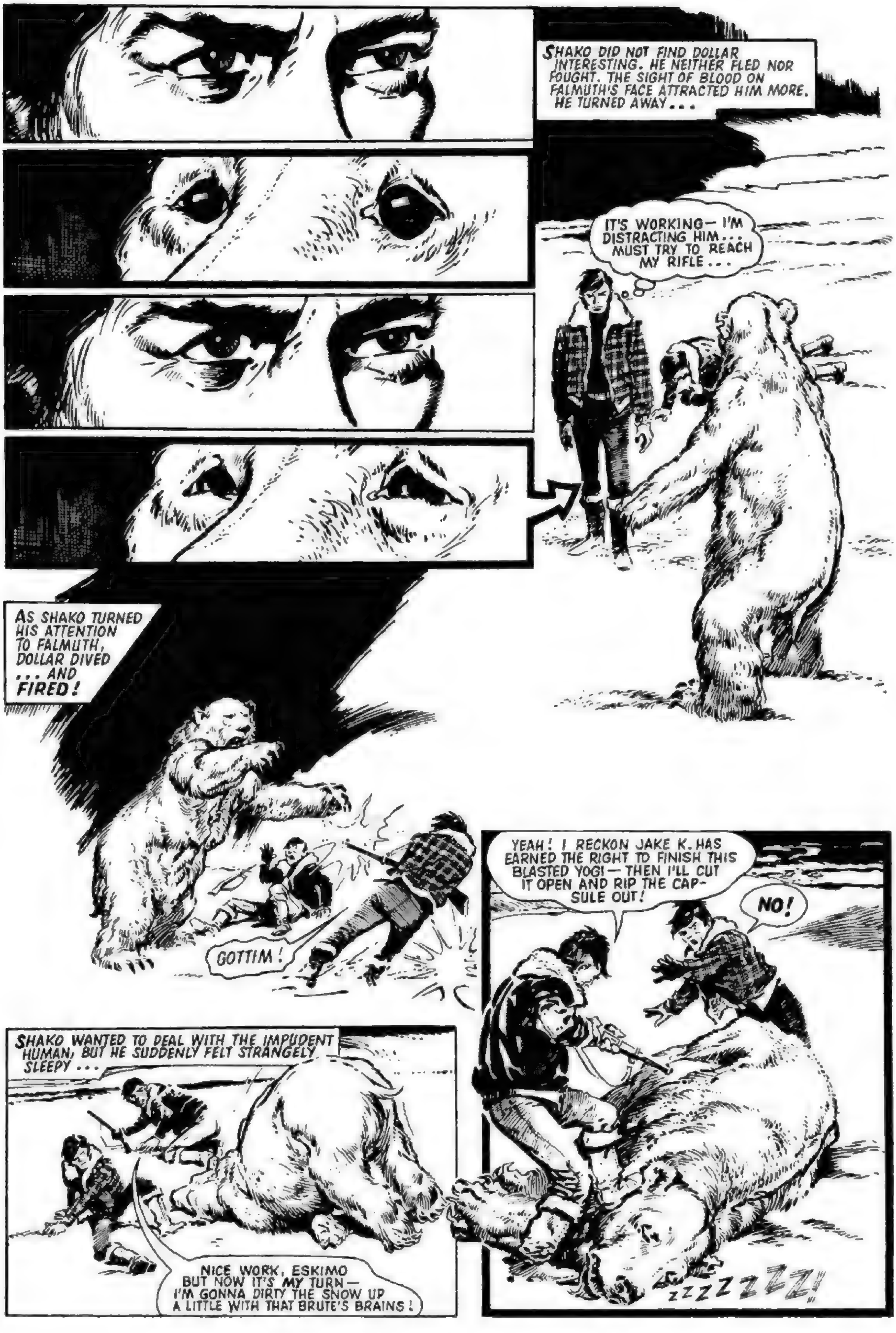

CRACK
NOW IT WAS SHAKO'S TURN. HE WOULD GET REVENGE ON THESE RIDICULOUS HUMANS!
SHAKO SEIZED JIMBO...
AAH! THE YOGI'S GOT HIS :HIC!: TEETH GRINDING INTO MY TOOTSIE!
SHAKO WOULD TAKE HIM AWAY FOR... SPECIAL TREATMENT!
NO, FALMUTH! DON'T SHOOT! YOU COULD HIT JIMBO!
SHAKO SHOOK HIS VICTIM... ENJOYED THE HUMAN'S TERROR...
YOU LOUSY FOOL, DOLLAR! JIMBO'S HAD IT, ANYWAY!
PLEASE... :SOB!:... SCREAM!

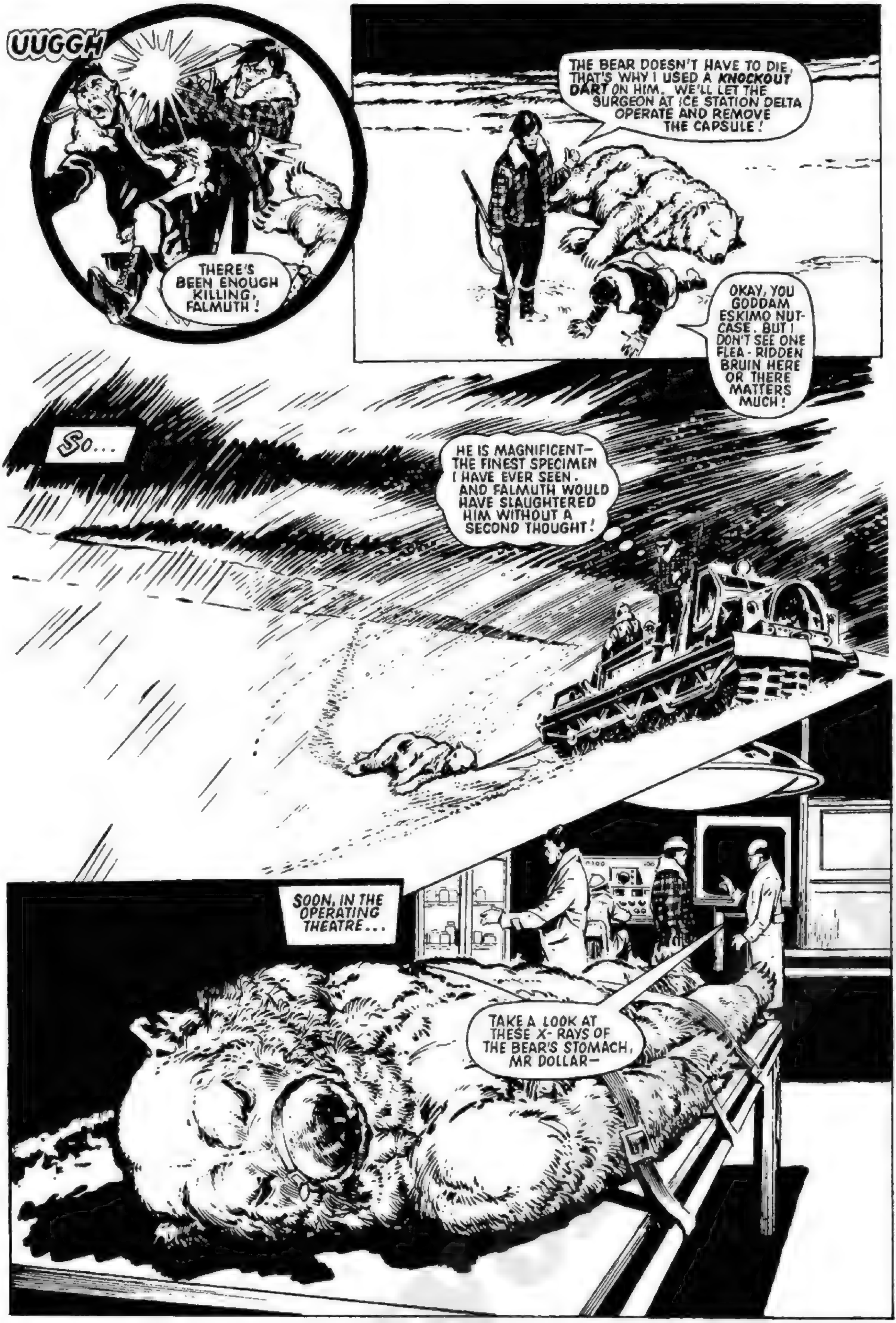

SHAKO DRAGGED JIMBO OUT OF SIGHT OF THE SHIP. SUDDENLY HE SPOTTED THE BOTTLE . . .
YOU WANT A DRINKIE, BOY...? YEAH, HAVE A DRINKIE WITH OL' JIMBO... HIC!
THE LIQUID WAS STRANGE. WARMER AND SWEETER THAN WATER. BUT SHAKO DECIDED THAT HE LIKED IT!
THAT-THASH A BOY... LEMME TOP YOU UP, YOGI... BEST IRISH WHISKEY ... IT'LL MAKE YOU MORE FRIENDLY . . .
YOU WOULDN'T EAT OL' JIMBO WOULD YA, YOGI? HIC! WE'RE DRINKING PALS NOW..
AS THE DRINK TOOK EFFECT, SHAKO BECAME CONFUSED. HE REMEMBERED ONLY ONE JIMBO—BUT NOW... THERE WERE TWO!
SHAKO WANTED TO HAVE FUN WITH JIMBO—BUT HE COULDN'T LOOK AFTER TWO OF THEM. ONE OF THEM WOULD HAVE TO GO . . .
CHOKE! NO!
JIMBO'S DEATH CRY! HOW MANY MORE MEN MUST BE TORN APART BEFORE WE GIVE UP, FALMUTH?
AAAAAAAAAAYYYYYYYY!!!
SHUDDUP, DOLLAR! I GOTTA GET THAT SECRET CAPSULE BACK! SO THAT STINKIN' BEAR HAS TO DIE! THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

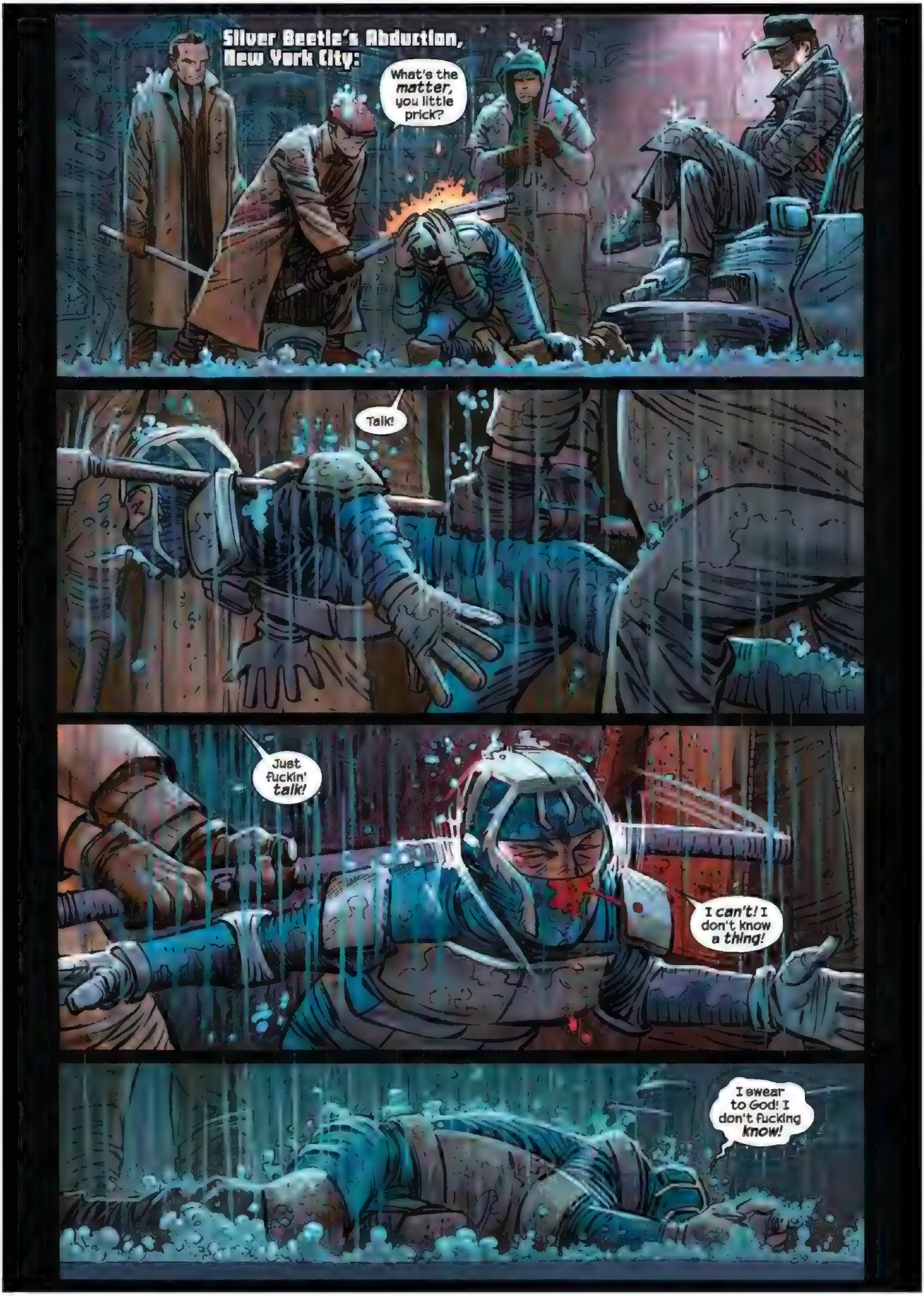

2000 A.D.
THRILL 2
THEY CAME TO KILL THE WHITE BEAR— BUT SHAKO WAS A KILLER, TOO!
NEAR ICE STATION DELTA, WITHIN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE...
THE PAW MARKS WE FOUND AREN'T MORE'N TWENTY MINUTES OLD—THAT BIG BRUIN CAN'T BE FAR AWAY, I'LL—HEY! COULD'VE SWORN I SAW THAT LUMP OF ICE MOVE, YOU SEE IT...?
ICE MOVE? YOUR BRAIN GOT FROST-BITE, ELMO?
SHAKO!
BETTER KEEP YOUR MIND ON THE JOB, OR THE BEAR'LL HAVE YOU!
SHAKO WAS NEARER THAN THEY IMAGINED! SLOWLY, STEALTHILY, HE EDGED THE ENORMOUS ICE BLOCK FORWARD. THIS TRICK ALWAYS FOOLED SEALS, SO WHY NOT STUPID HUMANS?
FALMUTH'S PAYIN' FIVE HUNDRED SMACKERS TO THE GUY WHO KILLS THAT BEAR AND WE'RE GONNA GET IT!
YEAH! IF HE SHOWS HIS UGLY MUG HERE, HE'S ONE DEAD BRUIN!

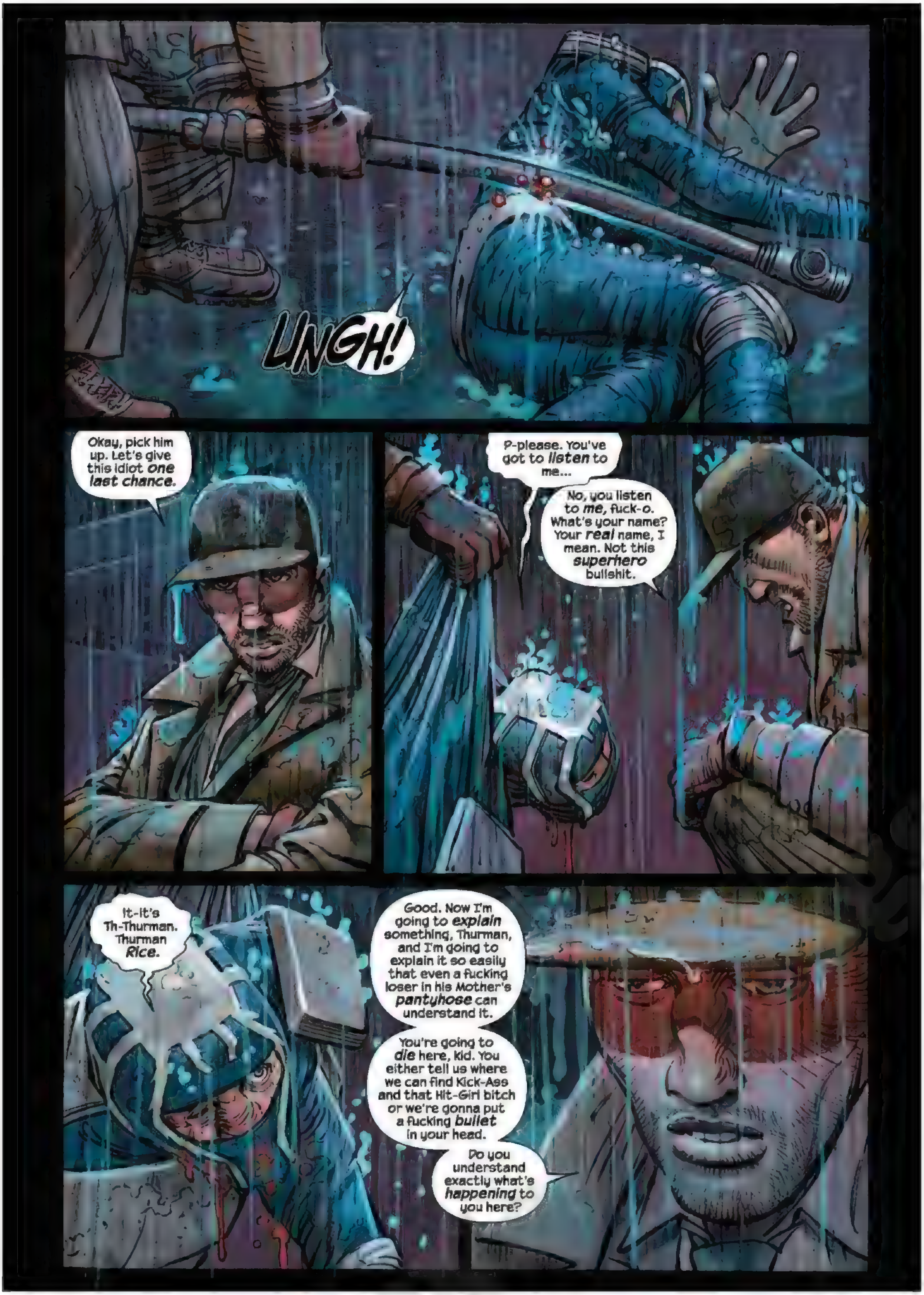

FALMUTH PUT A $500 BOUNTY ON SHAKO'S HEAD. BUT THE BEAR WAS A BETTER HUNTER THAN ANY GREEDY HUMAN!
AHHH! IT'S HIM!
BACK AT ICE STATION DELTA, BUCK DOLLAR HEARD THE MEN'S AGONISED SCREAMS SHAKE THE RADIO...
THAT BEAR NEVER HURT ANYONE 'TILL YOU CAME ALONG, FALMUTH. WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE HIM IN PEACE?
OKAY, DOLLAR, I S'POSE YOU GOTTA KNOW – BUT THIS IS TOP SECRET–
INSIDE THE CAPSULE THAT DARNED BEAR SWALLOWED WAS A LETHAL NEW VIRUS STRAIN... LOOK AT THESE PHOTOS...
"THIS IS A RABBIT BEFORE BEING INJECTED WITH VIRUS... THE OTHER PICTURE SHOWS IT TEN MINUTES LATER – EVERY BONE HAS TURNED TO JELLY!"
IT'S THE C.I.A.'S MOST DEADLY WEAPON AND IT'S STUCK IN THE BELLY OF THAT LOUSE RIDDEN BEAR!
SO LET'S CUT THE GUFF AND SHIFT YER BUTTS – WE GOTTA GET THAT CAPSULE AND BLOW THE BRUTE'S HEAD OFF!
SHAKO IS THE FINEST SPECIMEN I'VE EVER SEEN, AND ALL "FOULMOUTH" WANTS TO DO IS SLASH HIM OPEN. THIS ANAESTHETIC DART MIGHT HELP ME SAVE THE BEAR!
LIKE ALL POLAR BEARS, SHAKO WAS EXTREMELY PLAYFUL. HE HAD NIBBLED ONE OF HIS "PLAYMATES", AND NOW WAS AMUSING HIMSELF BY ROLLING ON THE OTHER.
THERE THEY ARE! HECK! ONE'S STILL ALIVE.

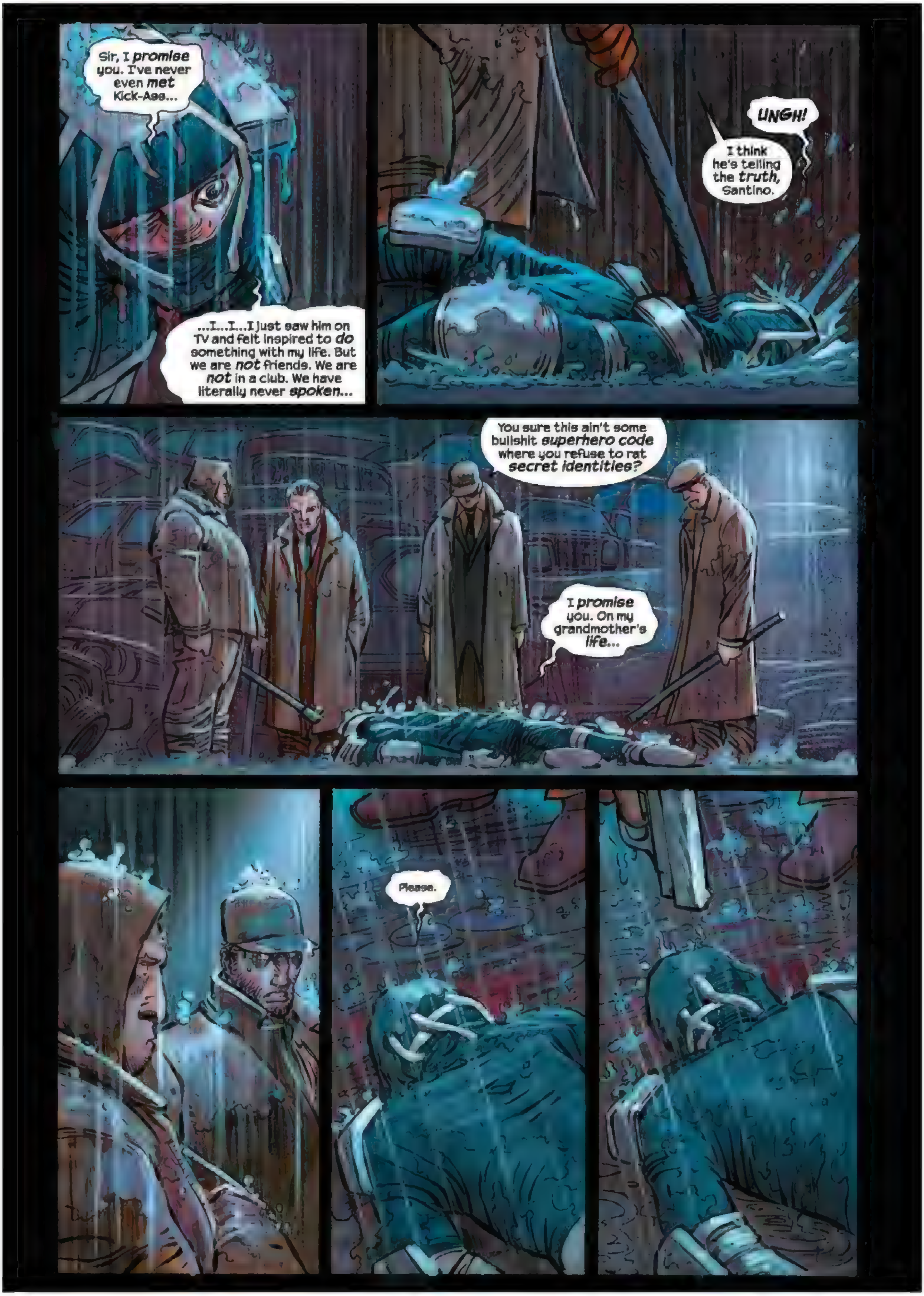

BLEW ITS LUGHOLE OFF—AND THAT'S JEST FOR STARTERS!
NO, FALMUTH—
MISSED! FOLLOW THAT LOUSY BRUTE.. FASTER! I'M GONNA PUT AN OUNCE O' LEAD INTO ITS ROTTEN BRAIN!
SHAKO TOOK REFUGE UNDER-WATER. HE HAD DONE NOTHING TO THESE PEOPLE AND DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THEY HAD STUNG HIM. IT MADE HIM...
ZING!
ZING!
ZING!
MAD!
THE ICE NEAR THE EDGE WAS OVER SIX INCHES THICK. BUT SHAKO'S GREAT BULK SHOT TOWARDS IT LIKE A BATTERING RAM!
LOOK OUT!
AAAAH!
CRASH
WITH ONE SLOG, SHAKO GAVE THE DRIVER A WILD HEAD-ACHE...
CRAC!
NOW HE'S COMING FOR ME..
BUCK DOLLAR'S ESKIMO BLOOD TOLD HIM THAT IF HE RAN HE WAS A DEAD MAN...
MUSTN'T SHOW MY FEAR... THERE'S ONLY ONE CHANCE... ESKIMO TRICK MY PA TAUGHT ME ...GOTTA STARE HIM DOWN!

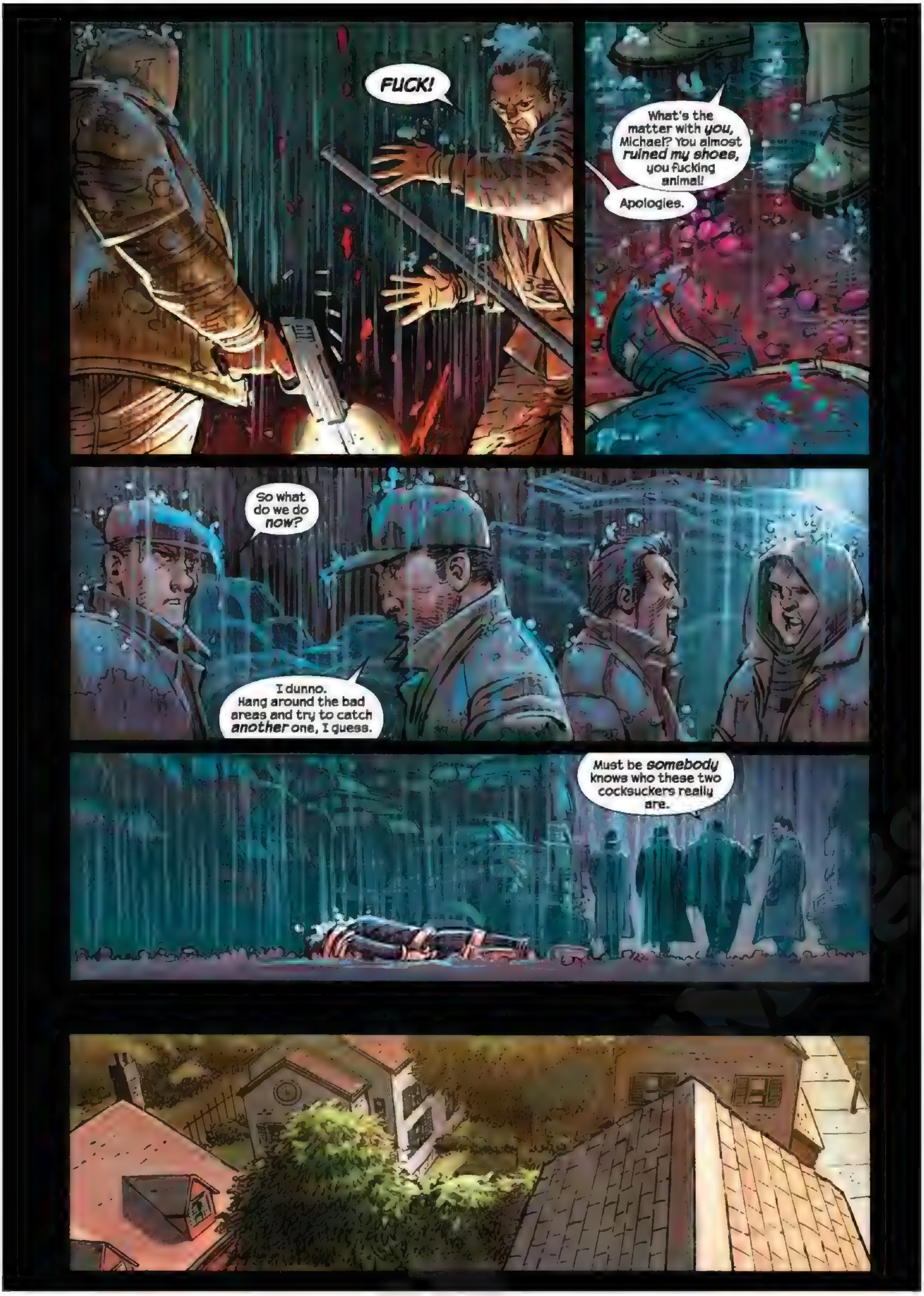

SHAKO DID NOT FIND DOLLAR INTERESTING. HE NEITHER FLED NOR FOUGHT. THE SIGHT OF BLOOD ON FALMUTH'S FACE ATTRACTED HIM MORE. HE TURNED AWAY . . .
IT'S WORKING— I'M DISTRACTING HIM . . . MUST TRY TO REACH MY RIFLE . . .
AS SHAKO TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO FALMUTH, DOLLAR DIVED . . . AND FIRED!
GOTTIM!
YEAH! I RECKON JAKE K. HAS EARNED THE RIGHT TO FINISH THIS BLASTED YOGI— THEN I'LL CUT IT OPEN AND RIP THE CAPSULE OUT!
NO!
SHAKO WANTED TO DEAL WITH THE IMPUDENT HUMAN, BUT HE SUDDENLY FELT STRANGELY SLEEPY . . .
NICE WORK, ESKIMO BUT NOW IT'S MY TURN— I'M GONNA DIRTY THE SNOW UP A LITTLE WITH THAT BRUTE'S BRAINS!
ZZZZZZZ!

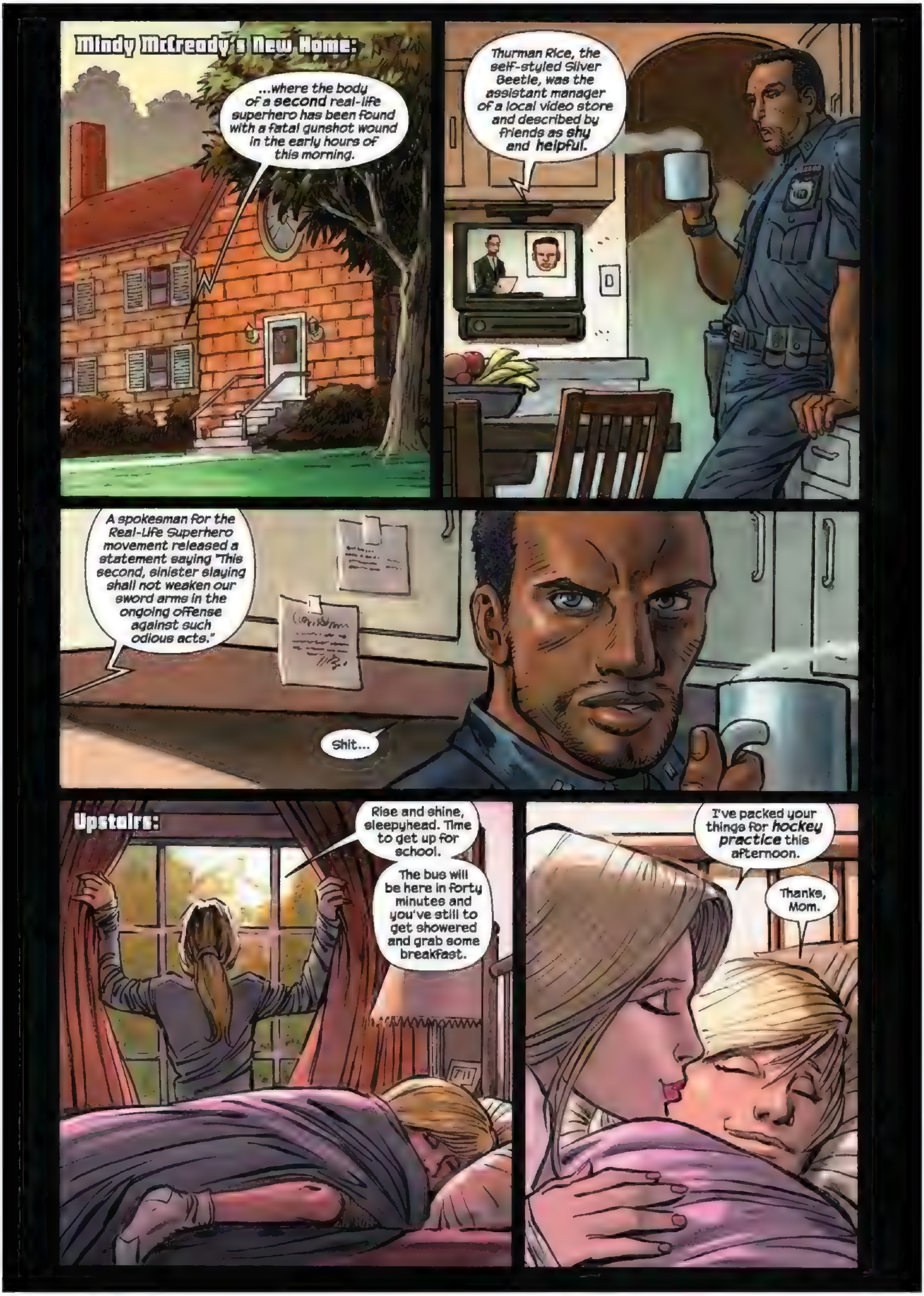

UUGGH
THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH KILLING, FALMUTH!
THE BEAR DOESN'T HAVE TO DIE, THAT'S WHY I USED A **KNOCKOUT DART** ON HIM. WE'LL LET THE SURGEON AT ICE STATION DELTA OPERATE AND REMOVE THE CAPSULE!
OKAY, YOU GODDAM ESKIMO NUT-CASE. BUT I DON'T SEE ONE FLEA-RIDDEN BRUIN HERE OR THERE MATTERS MUCH!
SO...
HE IS MAGNIFICENT— THE FINEST SPECIMEN I HAVE EVER SEEN. AND FALMUTH WOULD HAVE SLAUGHTERED HIM WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT!
SOON, IN THE OPERATING THEATRE...
TAKE A LOOK AT THESE X-RAYS OF THE BEAR'S STOMACH, MR DOLLAR—

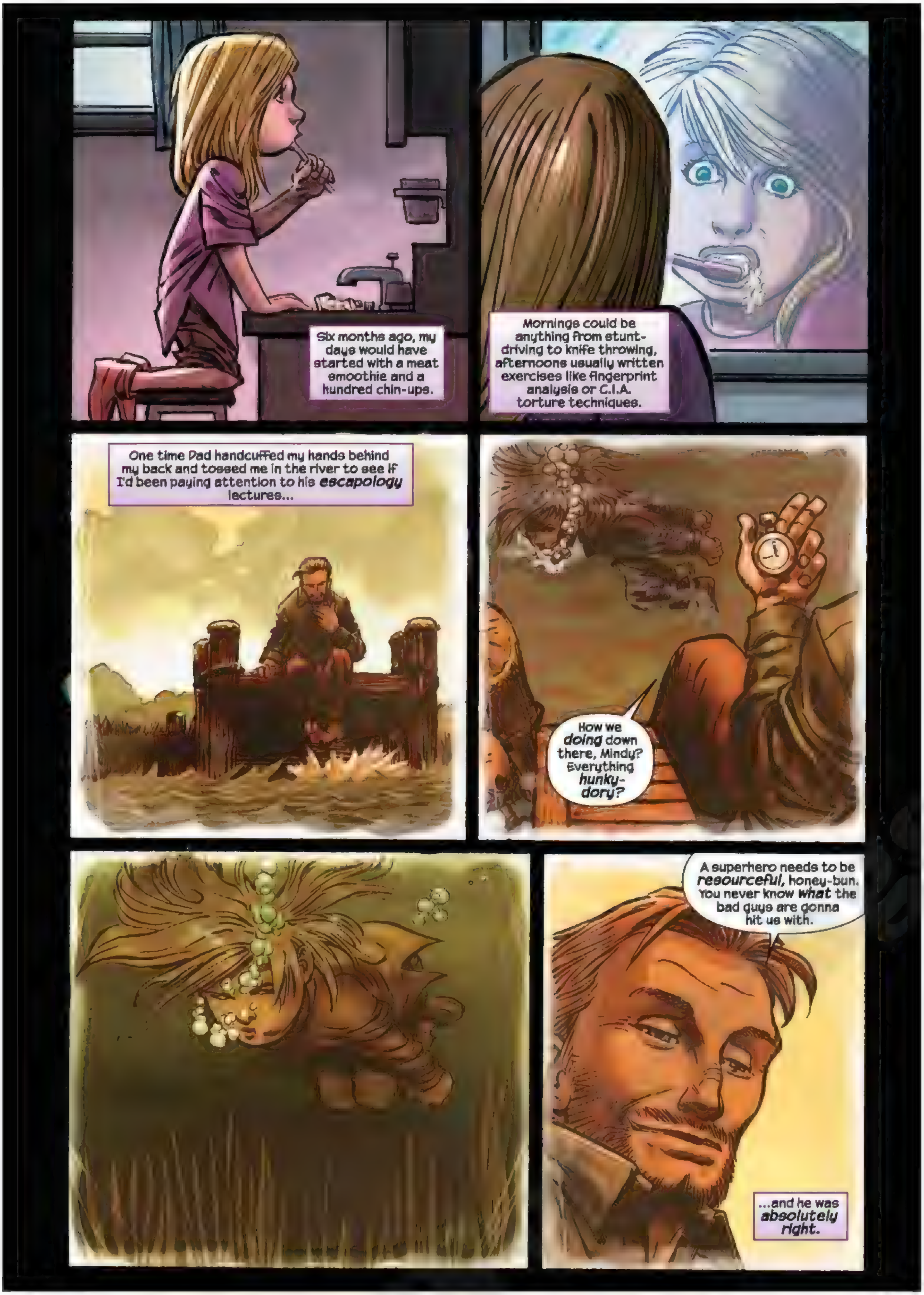

Silver Beetle's Abduction, New York City:
What's the *matter,* you little prick?
Talk!
Just fuckin' *talk!*
I *can't!* I don't know a *thing!*
I swear to God! I don't fucking *know!*

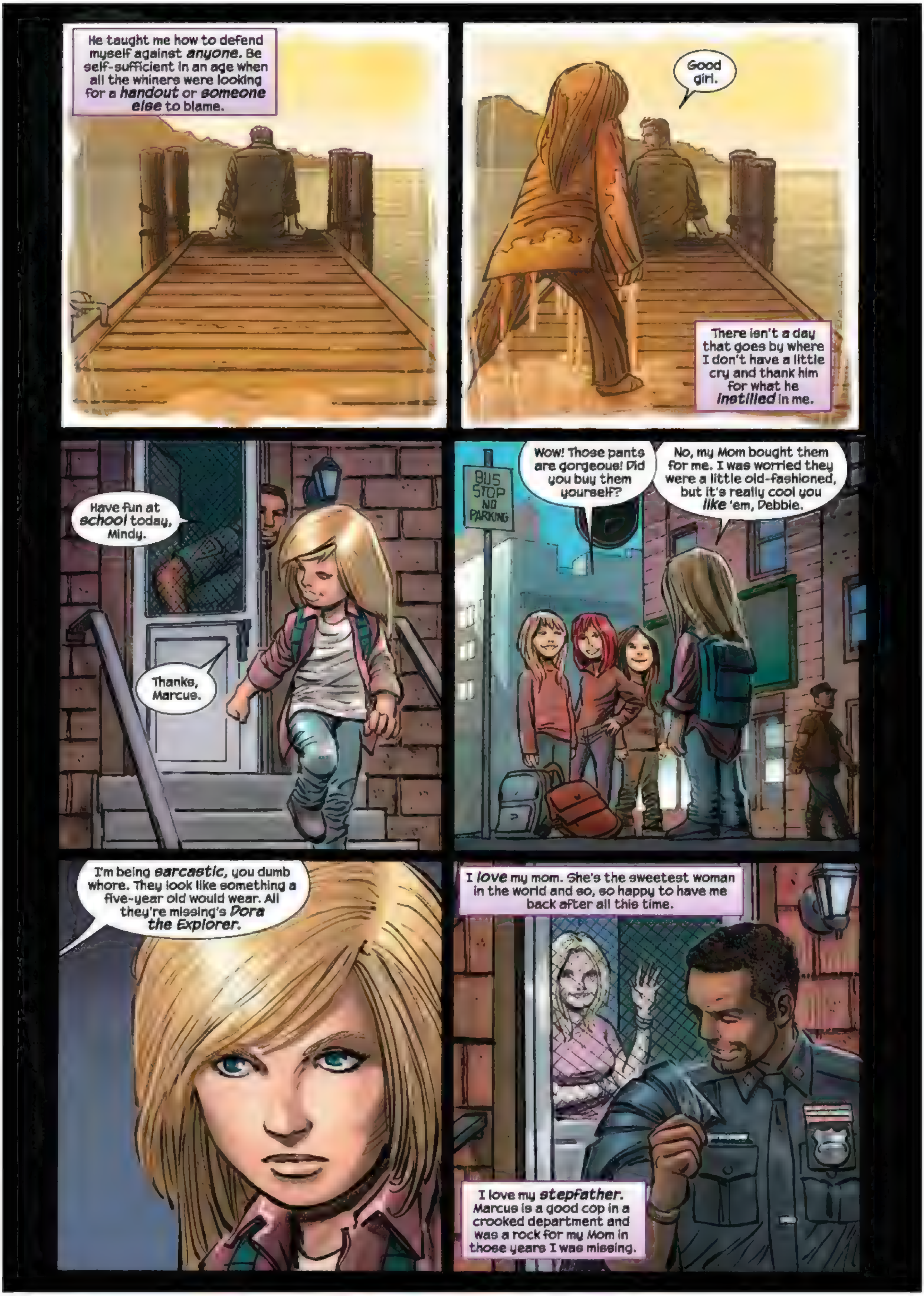

UNGH!
Okay, pick him up. Let's give this idiot *one last chance.*
P-please. You've got to *listen* to me...
No, you listen to *me,* fuck-o. What's your name? Your *real* name, I mean. Not this *superhero* bullshit.
It-it's Th-Thurman. Thurman *Rice.*
Good. Now I'm going to *explain* something, Thurman, and I'm going to explain it so easily that even a fucking loser in his Mother's *pantyhose* can understand it.
You're going to *die* here, kid. You either tell us where we can find Kick-Ass and that Hit-Girl bitch or we're gonna put a fucking *bullet* in your head.
Do you understand exactly what's *happening* to you here?

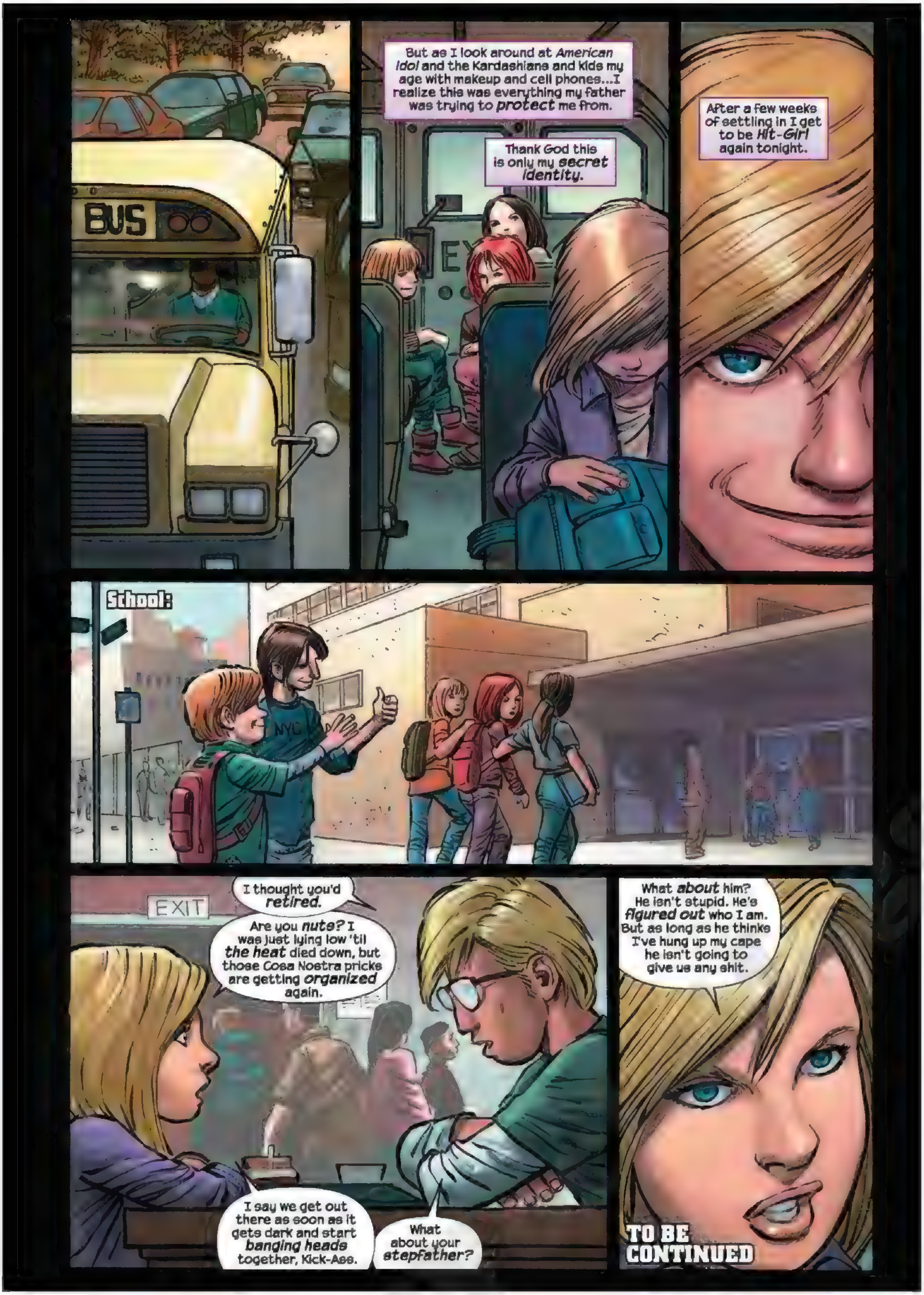

Sir, I *promise* you. I've never even *met* Kick-Ass...
...I...I...I just saw him on TV and felt inspired to *do* something with my life. But we are *not* friends. We are *not* in a club. We have literally never *spoken*...
UNGH!
I think he's telling the *truth*, Santino.
You sure this ain't some bullshit *superhero code* where you refuse to rat *secret identities?*
I *promise* you. On my grandmother's *life*...
Please.

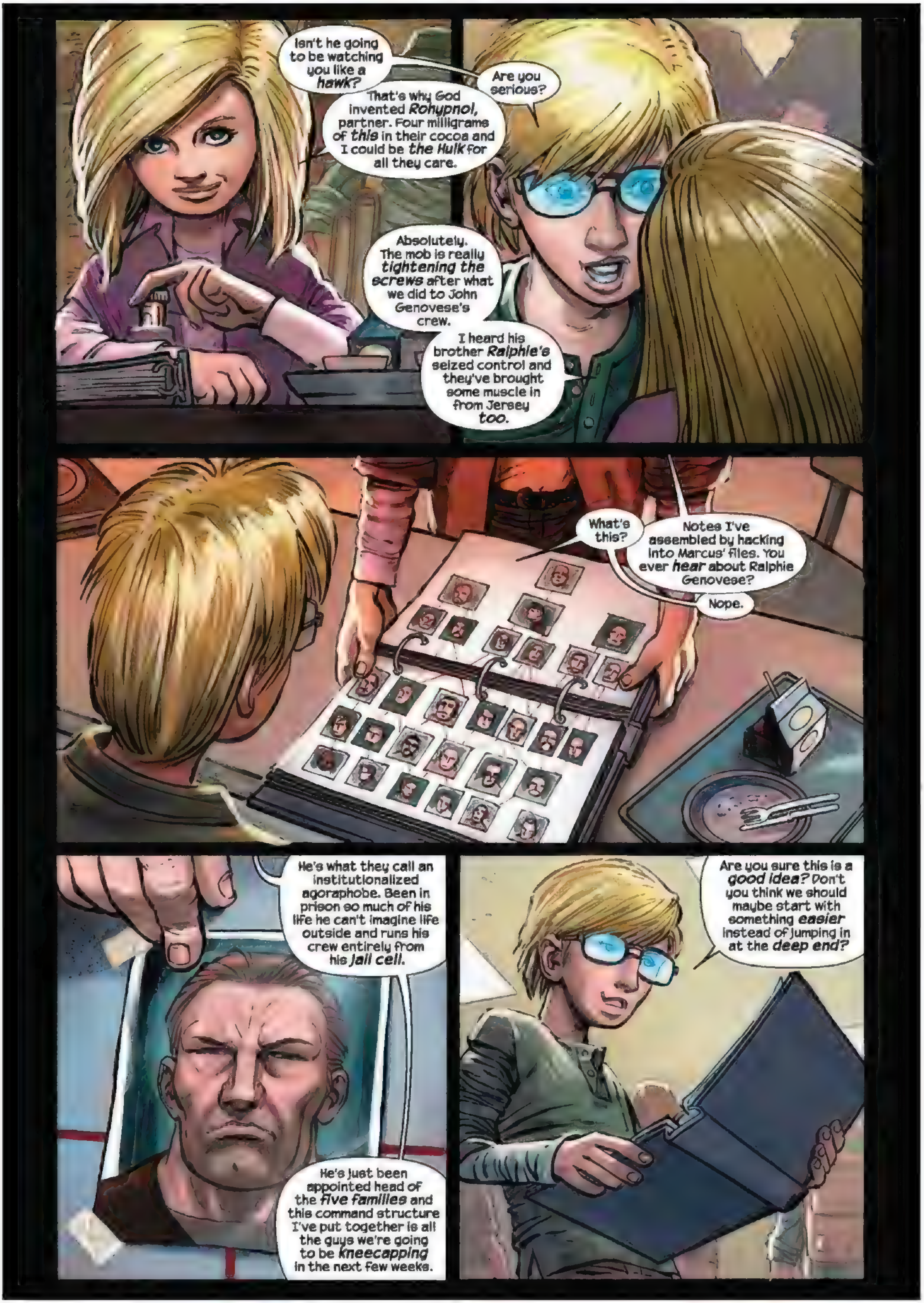

FUCK!
What's the matter with *you*, Michael? You almost *ruined my shoes*, you fucking animal!
Apologies.
So what do we do *now?*
I dunno. Hang around the bad areas and try to catch *another* one, I guess.
Must be *somebody* knows who these two cocksuckers really are.

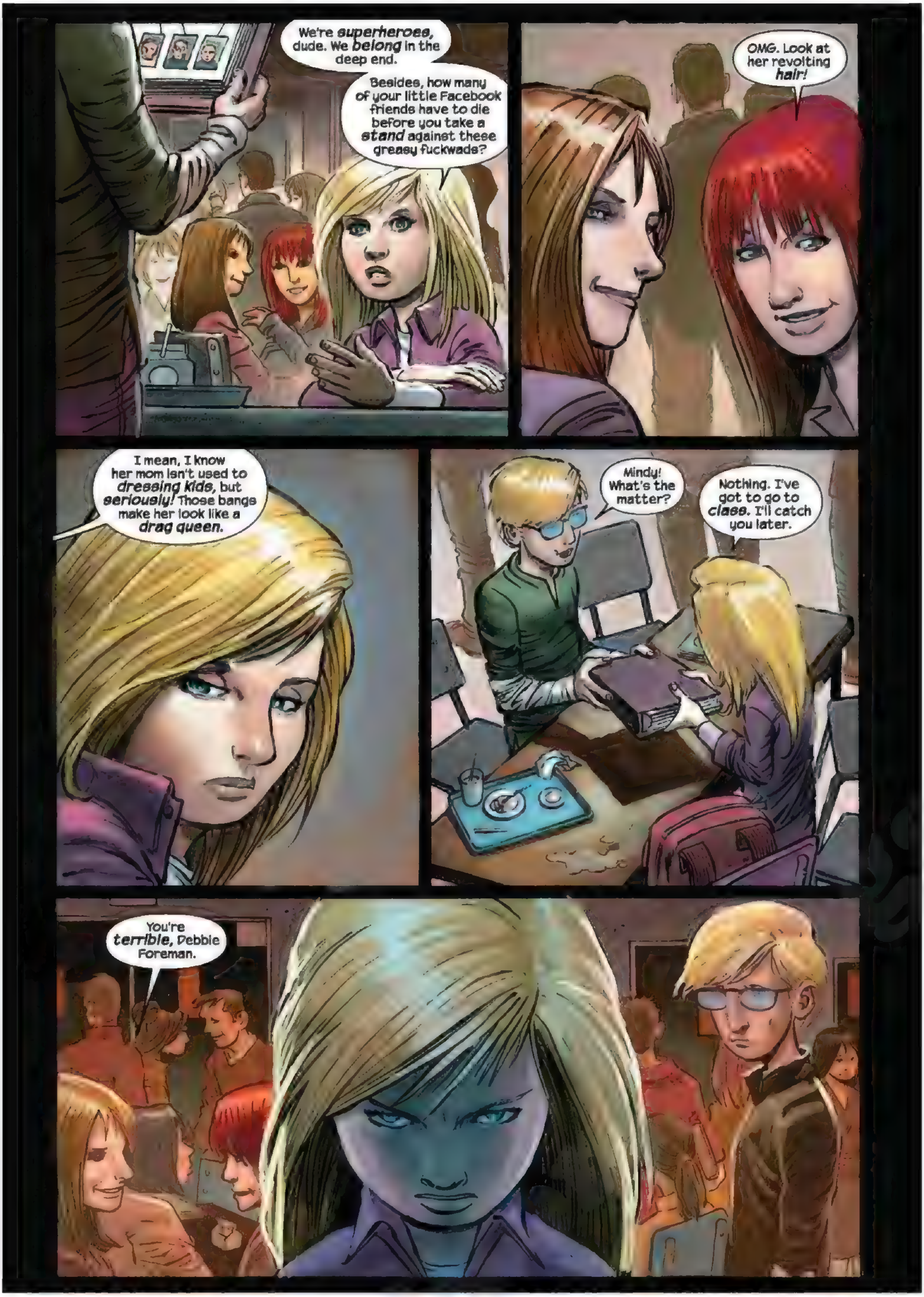

Mindy McCready's New Home:
...where the body of a **second** real-life superhero has been found with a fatal gunshot wound in the early hours of this morning.
Thurman Rice, the self-styled Silver Beetle, was the assistant manager of a local video store and described by friends as **shy** and **helpful**.
A spokesman for the Real-Life Superhero movement released a statement saying "This second, sinister slaying shall not weaken our sword arms in the ongoing offense against such odious acts."
Shit...
Upstairs:
Rise and shine, sleepyhead. Time to get up for school.
The bus will be here in forty minutes and you've still to get showered and grab some breakfast.
I've packed your things for ***hockey practice*** this afternoon.
Thanks, Mom.

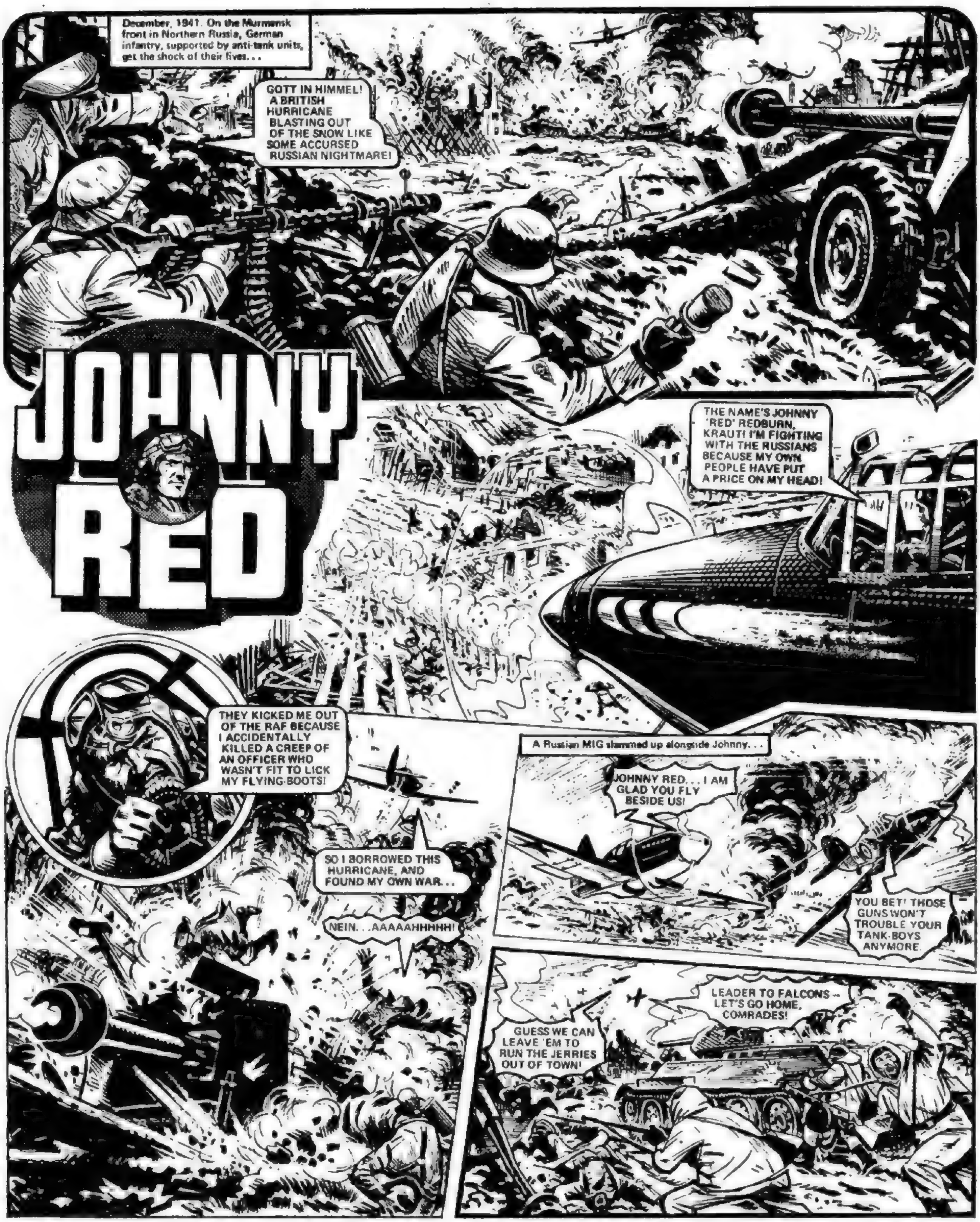

Six months ago, my days would have started with a meat smoothie and a hundred chin-ups.
Mornings could be anything from stunt-driving to knife throwing, afternoons usually written exercises like fingerprint analysis or C.I.A. torture techniques.
One time Dad handcuffed my hands behind my back and tossed me in the river to see if I'd been paying attention to his *escapology* lectures...
How we *doing* down there, Mindy? Everything *hunky-dory?*
A superhero needs to be *resourceful,* honey-bun. You never know *what* the bad guys are gonna hit us with.
...and he was *absolutely right.*

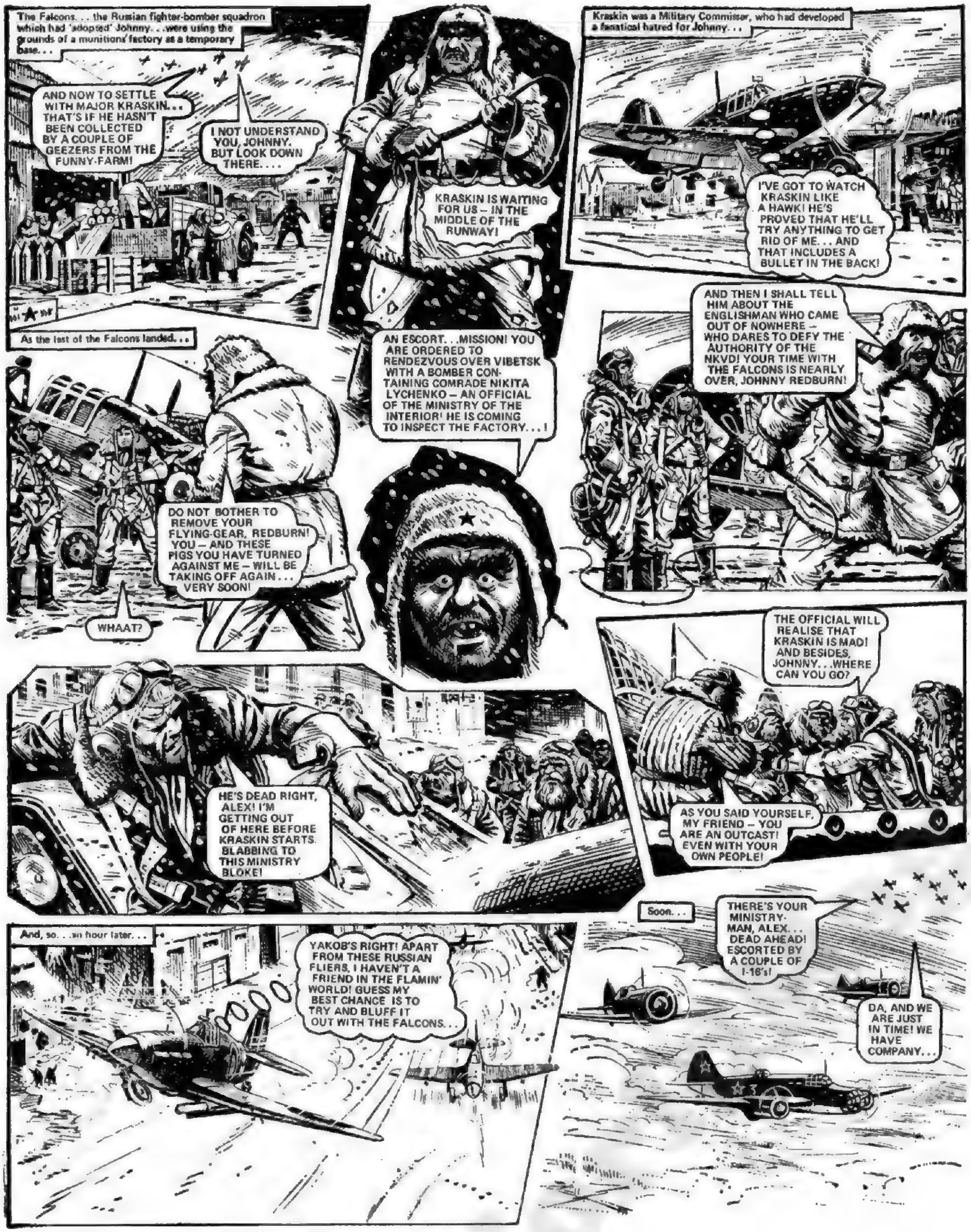

He taught me how to defend myself against *anyone.* Be self-sufficient in an age when all the whiners were looking for a *handout* or *someone else* to blame.
Good girl.
There isn't a day that goes by where I don't have a little cry and thank him for what he *instilled* in me.
Have fun at *school* today, Mindy.
Thanks, Marcus.
BUS STOP NO PARKING
Wow! Those pants are gorgeous! Did you buy them yourself?
No, my Mom bought them for me. I was worried they were a little old-fashioned, but it's really cool you *like* 'em, Debbie.
I'm being *sarcastic,* you dumb whore. They look like something a five-year old would wear. All they're missing's *Dora the Explorer.*
I *love* my mom. She's the sweetest woman in the world and so, so happy to have me back after all this time.
I love my *stepfather.* Marcus is a good cop in a crooked department and was a rock for my Mom in those years I was missing.

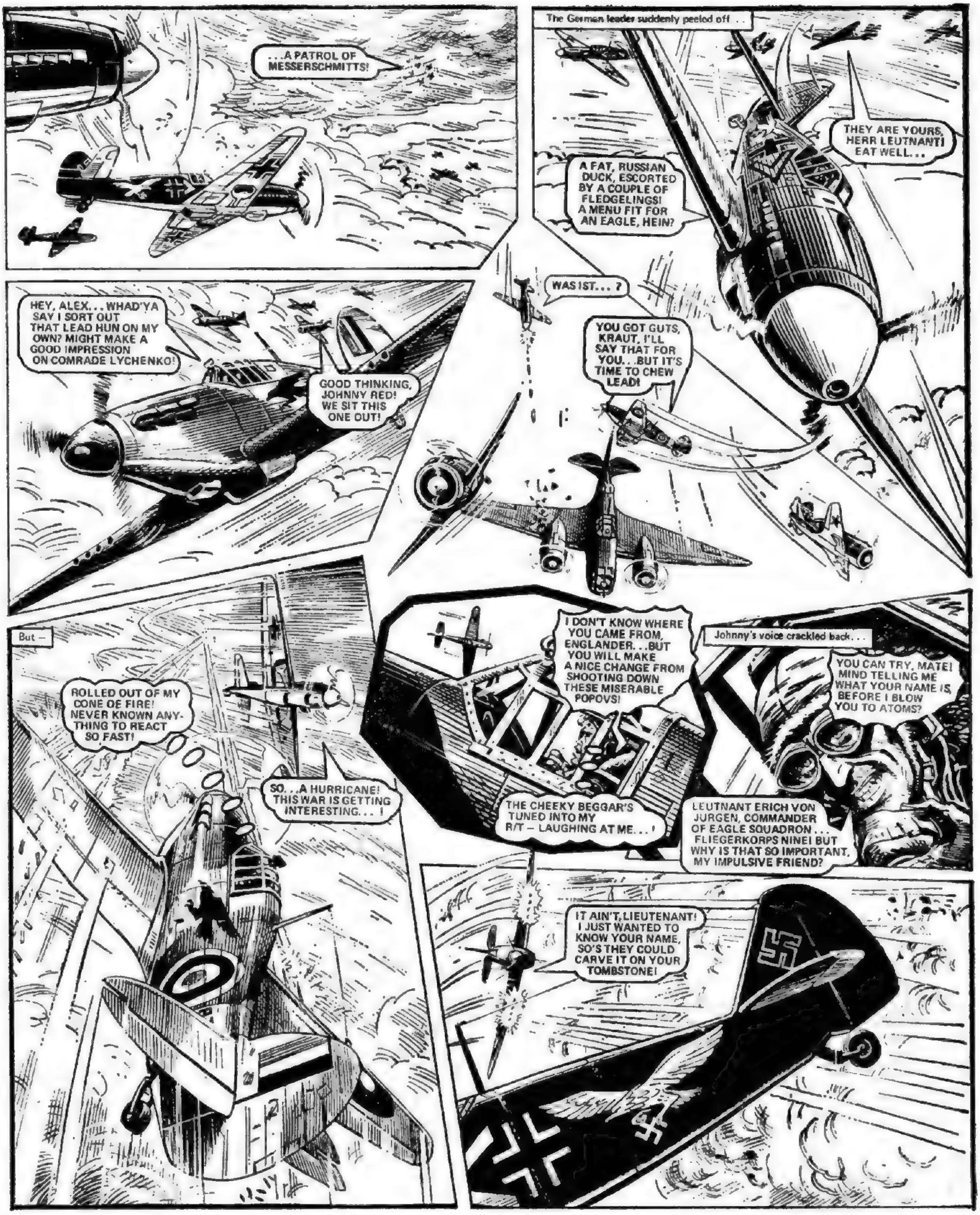

BUS
But as I look around at *American Idol* and the Kardashians and kids my age with makeup and cell phones...I realize this was everything my father was trying to *protect* me from.
Thank God this is only my *secret identity.*
After a few weeks of settling in I get to be *Hit-Girl* again tonight.
School:
NYC
EXIT
I thought you'd *retired.*
Are you *nuts?* I was just lying low 'til *the heat* died down, but those Cosa Nostra pricks are getting *organized* again.
I say we get out there as soon as it gets dark and start *banging heads* together, Kick-Ass.
What about your *stepfather?*
What *about* him? He isn't stupid. He's *figured out* who I am. But as long as he thinks I've hung up my cape he isn't going to give us any shit.
TO BE CONTINUED

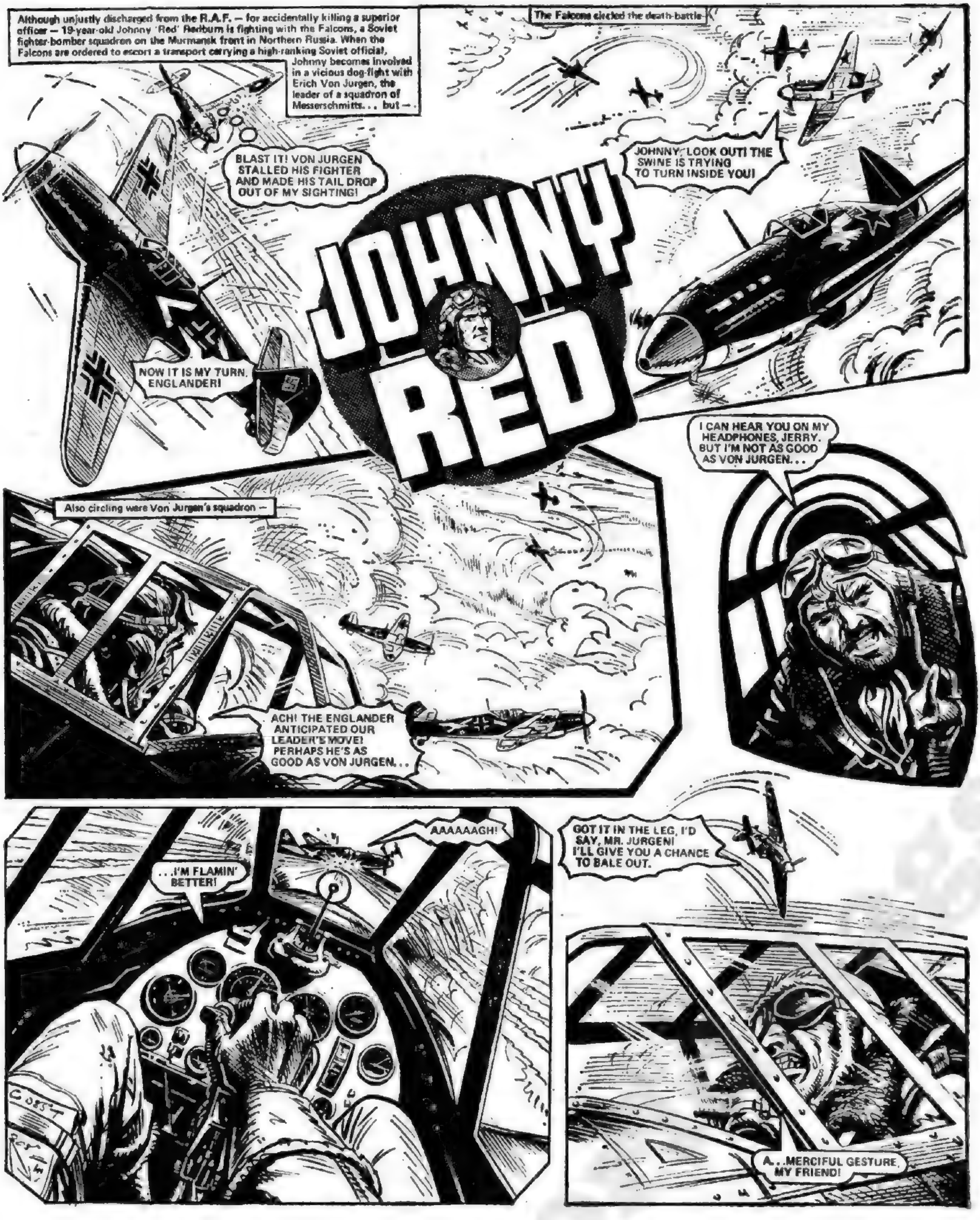

Isn't he going to be watching you like a *hawk?*
Are you serious?
That's why God invented *Rohypnol,* partner. Four milligrams of *this* in their cocoa and I could be *the Hulk* for all they care.
Absolutely. The mob is really *tightening the screws* after what we did to John Genovese's crew.
I heard his brother *Ralphie's* seized control and they've brought some muscle in from Jersey *too.*
What's this?
Notes I've assembled by hacking into Marcus' files. You ever *hear* about Ralphie Genovese?
Nope.
He's what they call an institutionalized agoraphobe. Been in prison so much of his life he can't imagine life outside and runs his crew entirely from his *jail cell.*
He's just been appointed head of the *five families* and this command structure I've put together is all the guys we're going to be *kneecapping* in the next few weeks.
Are you sure this is a *good idea?* Don't you think we should maybe start with something *easier* instead of jumping in at the *deep end?*

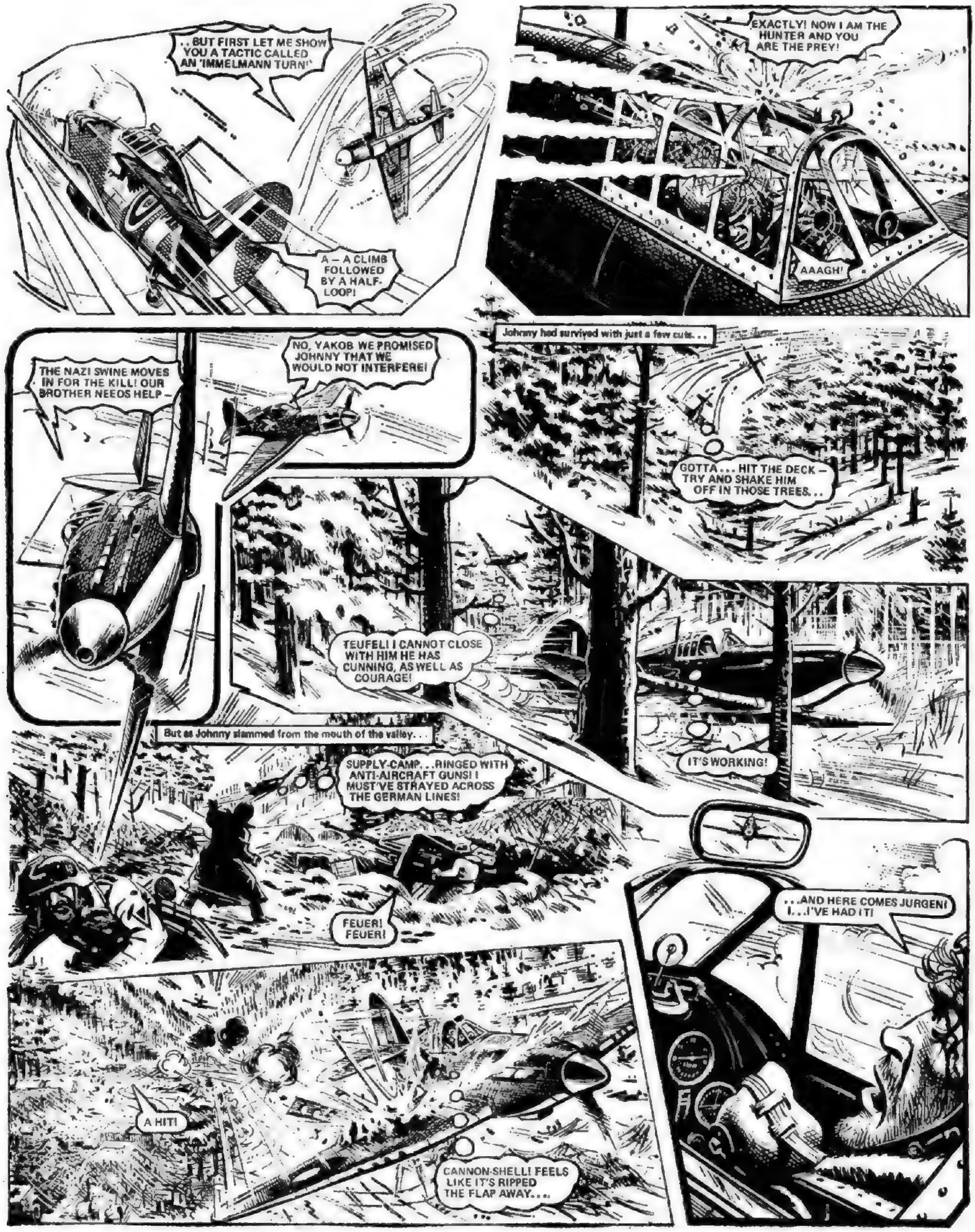

We're superheroes, dude. We belong in the deep end.
Besides, how many of your little Facebook friends have to die before you take a stand against these greasy fuckwads?
OMG. Look at her revolting hair!
I mean, I know her mom isn't used to dressing kids, but seriously! Those bangs make her look like a drag queen.
Mindy! What's the matter?
Nothing. I've got to go to class. I'll catch you later.
You're terrible, Debbie Foreman.

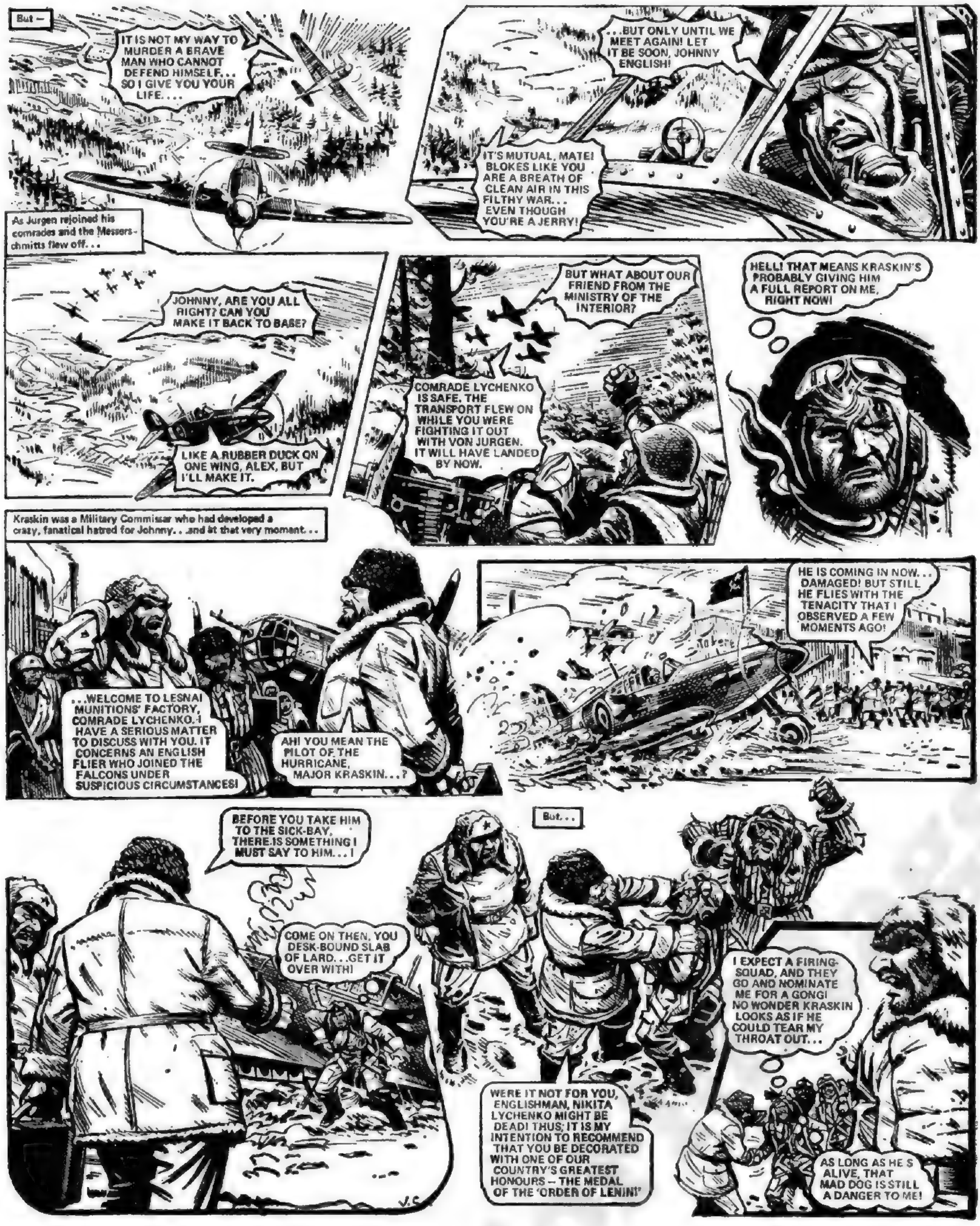

December, 1941. On the Murmansk front in Northern Russia, German infantry, supported by anti-tank units, get the shock of their lives...
GOTT IN HIMMEL! A BRITISH HURRICANE BLASTING OUT OF THE SNOW LIKE SOME ACCURSED RUSSIAN NIGHTMARE!
JOHNNY RED
THE NAME'S JOHNNY 'RED' REDBURN, KRAUT! I'M FIGHTING WITH THE RUSSIANS BECAUSE MY OWN PEOPLE HAVE PUT A PRICE ON MY HEAD!
THEY KICKED ME OUT OF THE RAF BECAUSE I ACCIDENTALLY KILLED A CREEP OF AN OFFICER WHO WASN'T FIT TO LICK MY FLYING-BOOTS!
SO I BORROWED THIS HURRICANE, AND FOUND MY OWN WAR...
NEIN...AAAAAHHHHH!
A Russian MIG slammed up alongside Johnny...
JOHNNY RED... I AM GLAD YOU FLY BESIDE US!
YOU BET! THOSE GUNS WON'T TROUBLE YOUR TANK-BOYS ANYMORE.
LEADER TO FALCONS — LET'S GO HOME, COMRADES!
GUESS WE CAN LEAVE 'EM TO RUN THE JERRIES OUT OF TOWN!

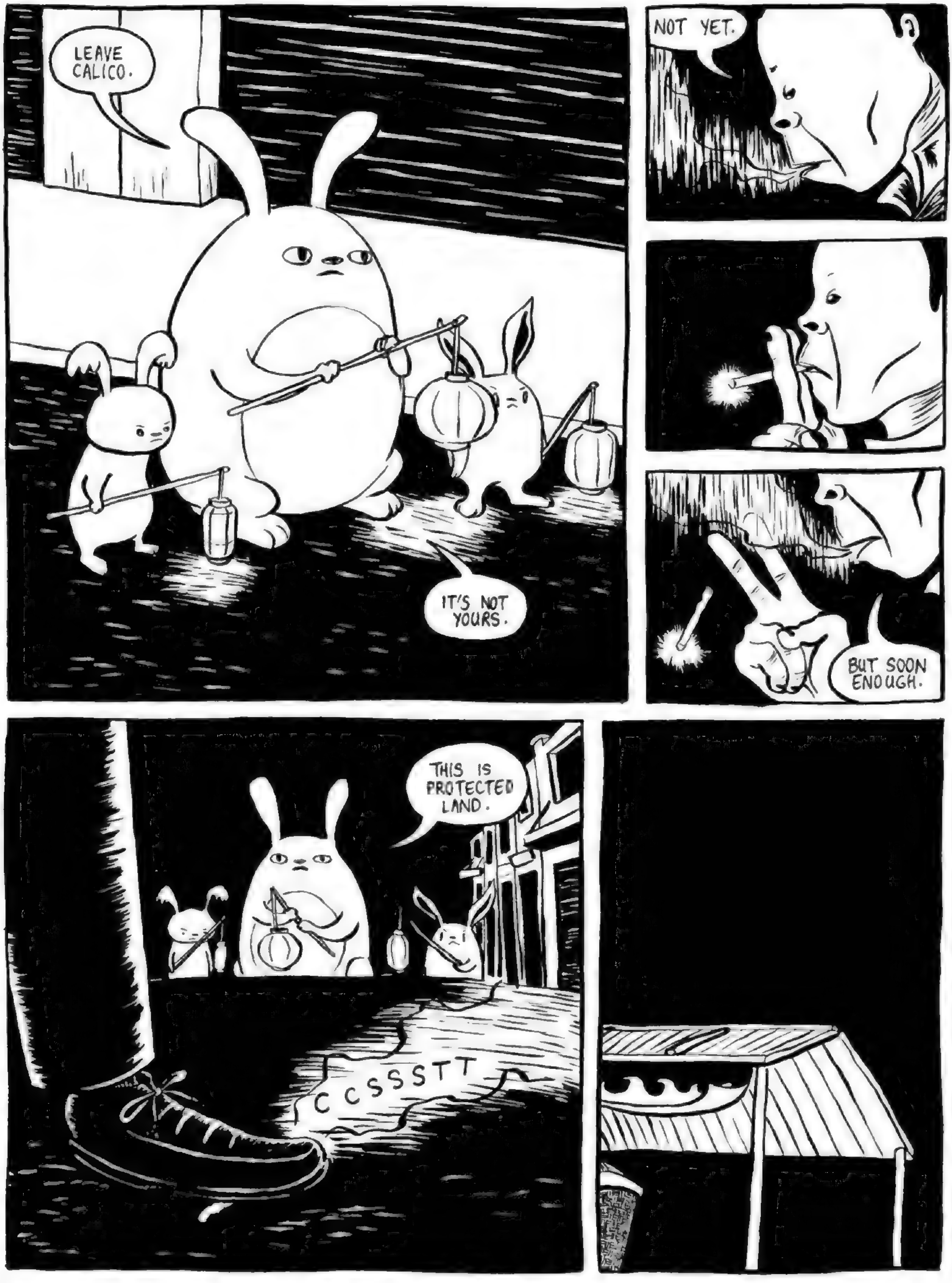

The Falcons. . . the Russian fighter-bomber squadron which had 'adopted' Johnny. . . were using the grounds of a munitions factory as a temporary base. . .
AND NOW TO SETTLE WITH MAJOR KRASKIN. . . THAT'S IF HE HASN'T BEEN COLLECTED BY A COUPLE OF GEEZERS FROM THE FUNNY-FARM!
I NOT UNDERSTAND YOU, JOHNNY. BUT LOOK DOWN THERE. . . .
KRASKIN IS WAITING FOR US – IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RUNWAY!
Kraskin was a Military Commissar, who had developed a fanatical hatred for Johnny. . .
I'VE GOT TO WATCH KRASKIN LIKE A HAWK! HE'S PROVED THAT HE'LL TRY ANYTHING TO GET RID OF ME. . . AND THAT INCLUDES A BULLET IN THE BACK!
As the last of the Falcons landed. . .
DO NOT BOTHER TO REMOVE YOUR FLYING-GEAR, REDBURN! YOU – AND THESE PIGS YOU HAVE TURNED AGAINST ME – WILL BE TAKING OFF AGAIN. . . VERY SOON!
WHAAT?
AN ESCORT. . . MISSION! YOU ARE ORDERED TO RENDEZVOUS OVER VIBETSK WITH A BOMBER CONTAINING COMRADE NIKITA LYCHENKO – AN OFFICIAL OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR! HE IS COMING TO INSPECT THE FACTORY. . . !
AND THEN I SHALL TELL HIM ABOUT THE ENGLISHMAN WHO CAME OUT OF NOWHERE – WHO DARES TO DEFY THE AUTHORITY OF THE NKVD! YOUR TIME WITH THE FALCONS IS NEARLY OVER, JOHNNY REDBURN!
HE'S DEAD RIGHT, ALEX! I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE BEFORE KRASKIN STARTS BLABBING TO THIS MINISTRY BLOKE!
THE OFFICIAL WILL REALISE THAT KRASKIN IS MAD! AND BESIDES, JOHNNY. . . WHERE CAN YOU GO?
AS YOU SAID YOURSELF, MY FRIEND – YOU ARE AN OUTCAST! EVEN WITH YOUR OWN PEOPLE!
And, so. . . an hour later. . .
YAKOB'S RIGHT! APART FROM THESE RUSSIAN FLIERS, I HAVEN'T A FRIEND IN THE FLAMIN' WORLD! GUESS MY BEST CHANCE IS TO TRY AND BLUFF IT OUT WITH THE FALCONS. . .
Soon. . .
THERE'S YOUR MINISTRY-MAN, ALEX. . . DEAD AHEAD! ESCORTED BY A COUPLE OF I-16's!
DA, AND WE ARE JUST IN TIME! WE HAVE COMPANY. . .

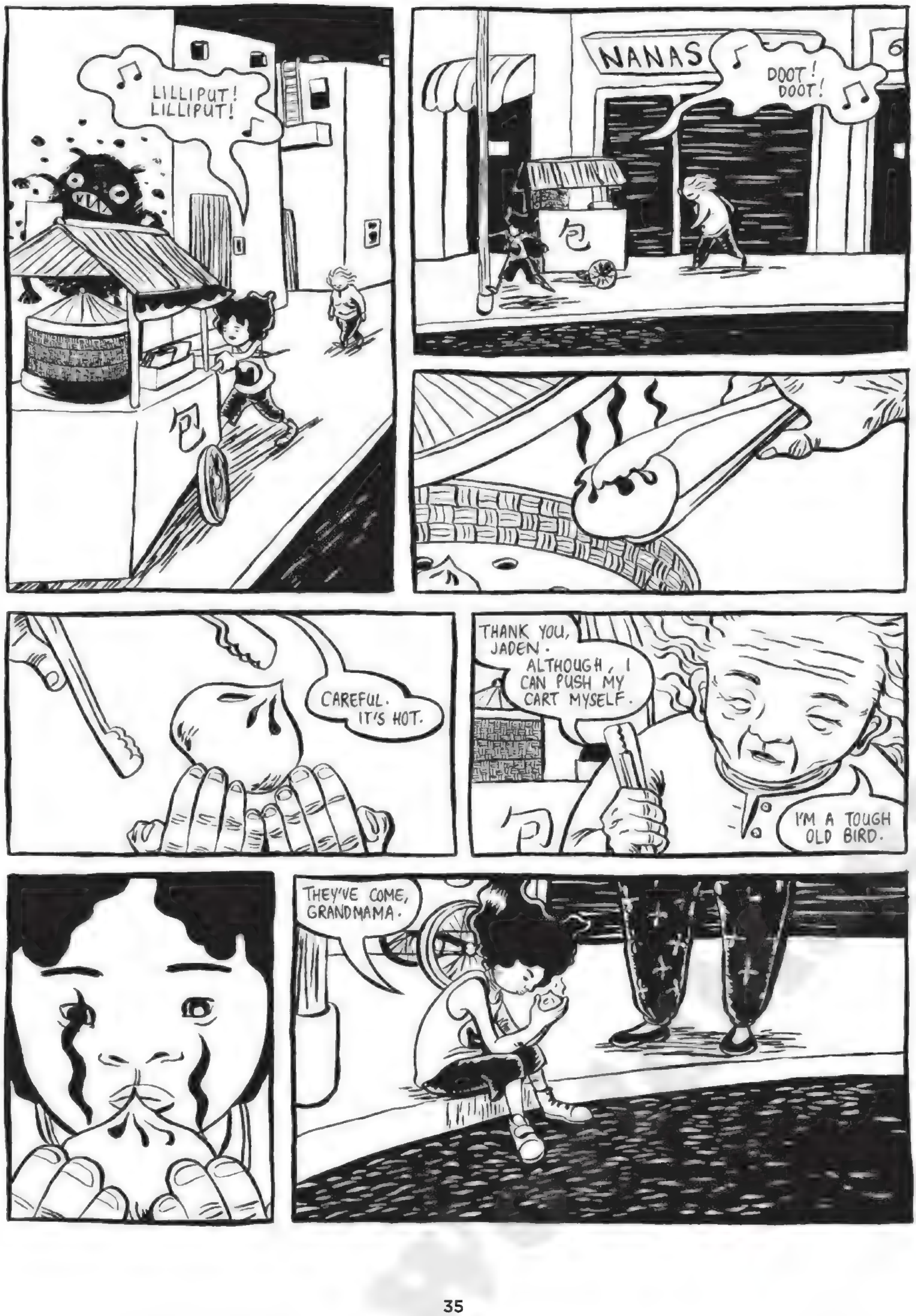

. . . A PATROL OF MESSERSCHMITTS!
The German leader suddenly peeled off . . .
A FAT, RUSSIAN DUCK, ESCORTED BY A COUPLE OF FLEDGELINGS! A MENU FIT FOR AN EAGLE, HEIN?
THEY ARE YOURS, HERR LEUTNANT! EAT WELL . . .
HEY, ALEX . . . WHAD'YA SAY I SORT OUT THAT LEAD HUN ON MY OWN? MIGHT MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON COMRADE LYCHENKO!
GOOD THINKING, JOHNNY RED! WE SIT THIS ONE OUT!
WAS IST . . . ?
YOU GOT GUTS, KRAUT, I'LL SAY THAT FOR YOU . . . BUT IT'S TIME TO CHEW LEAD!
But —
ROLLED OUT OF MY CONE OF FIRE! NEVER KNOWN ANYTHING TO REACT SO FAST!
SO . . . A HURRICANE! THIS WAR IS GETTING INTERESTING . . . !
I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU CAME FROM, ENGLANDER . . . BUT YOU WILL MAKE A NICE CHANGE FROM SHOOTING DOWN THESE MISERABLE POPOVS!
THE CHEEKY BEGGAR'S TUNED INTO MY R/T – LAUGHING AT ME . . . !
Johnny's voice crackled back . . .
YOU CAN TRY, MATE! MIND TELLING ME WHAT YOUR NAME IS, BEFORE I BLOW YOU TO ATOMS?
LEUTNANT ERICH VON JURGEN, COMMANDER OF EAGLE SQUADRON . . . FLIEGERKORPS NINE! BUT WHY IS THAT SO IMPORTANT, MY IMPULSIVE FRIEND?
IT AIN'T, LIEUTENANT! I JUST WANTED TO KNOW YOUR NAME, SO'S THEY COULD CARVE IT ON YOUR TOMBSTONE!

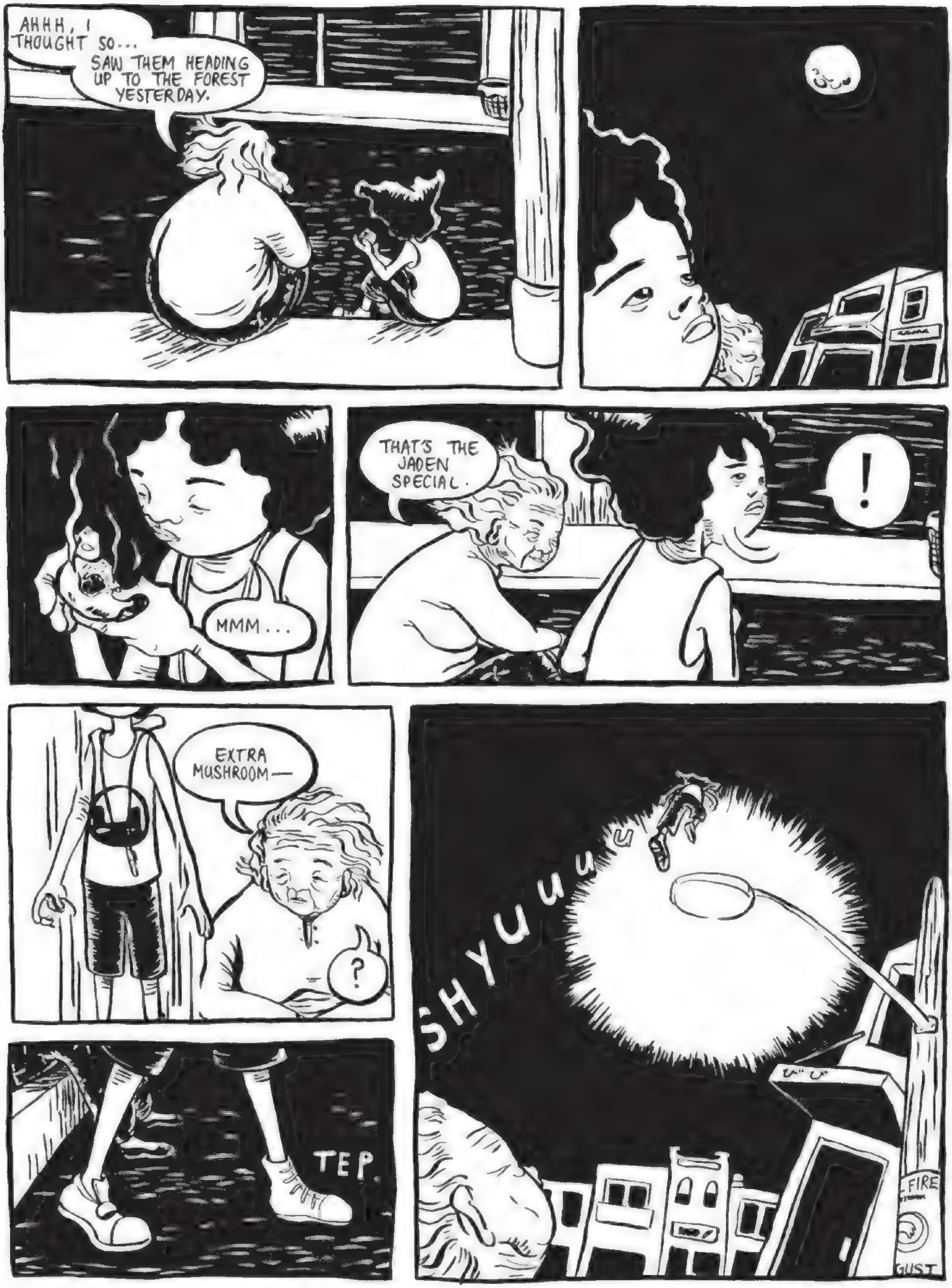

Although unjustly discharged from the R.A.F. — for accidentally killing a superior officer — 19-year-old Johnny 'Red' Redburn is fighting with the Falcons, a Soviet fighter-bomber squadron on the Murmansk front in Northern Russia. When the Falcons are ordered to escort a transport carrying a high-ranking Soviet official, Johnny becomes involved in a vicious dog-fight with Erich Von Jurgen, the leader of a squadron of Messerschmitts... but —
The Falcons circled the death-battle —
BLAST IT! VON JURGEN STALLED HIS FIGHTER AND MADE HIS TAIL DROP OUT OF MY SIGHTING!
JOHNNY, LOOK OUT! THE SWINE IS TRYING TO TURN INSIDE YOU!
JOHNNY RED
NOW IT IS MY TURN, ENGLANDER!
Also circling were Von Jurgen's squadron —
ACH! THE ENGLANDER ANTICIPATED OUR LEADER'S MOVE! PERHAPS HE'S AS GOOD AS VON JURGEN...
I CAN HEAR YOU ON MY HEADPHONES, JERRY. BUT I'M NOT AS GOOD AS VON JURGEN...
...I'M FLAMIN' BETTER!
AAAAAAGH!
GOT IT IN THE LEG, I'D SAY, MR. JURGEN! I'LL GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO BALE OUT.
A... MERCIFUL GESTURE, MY FRIEND!

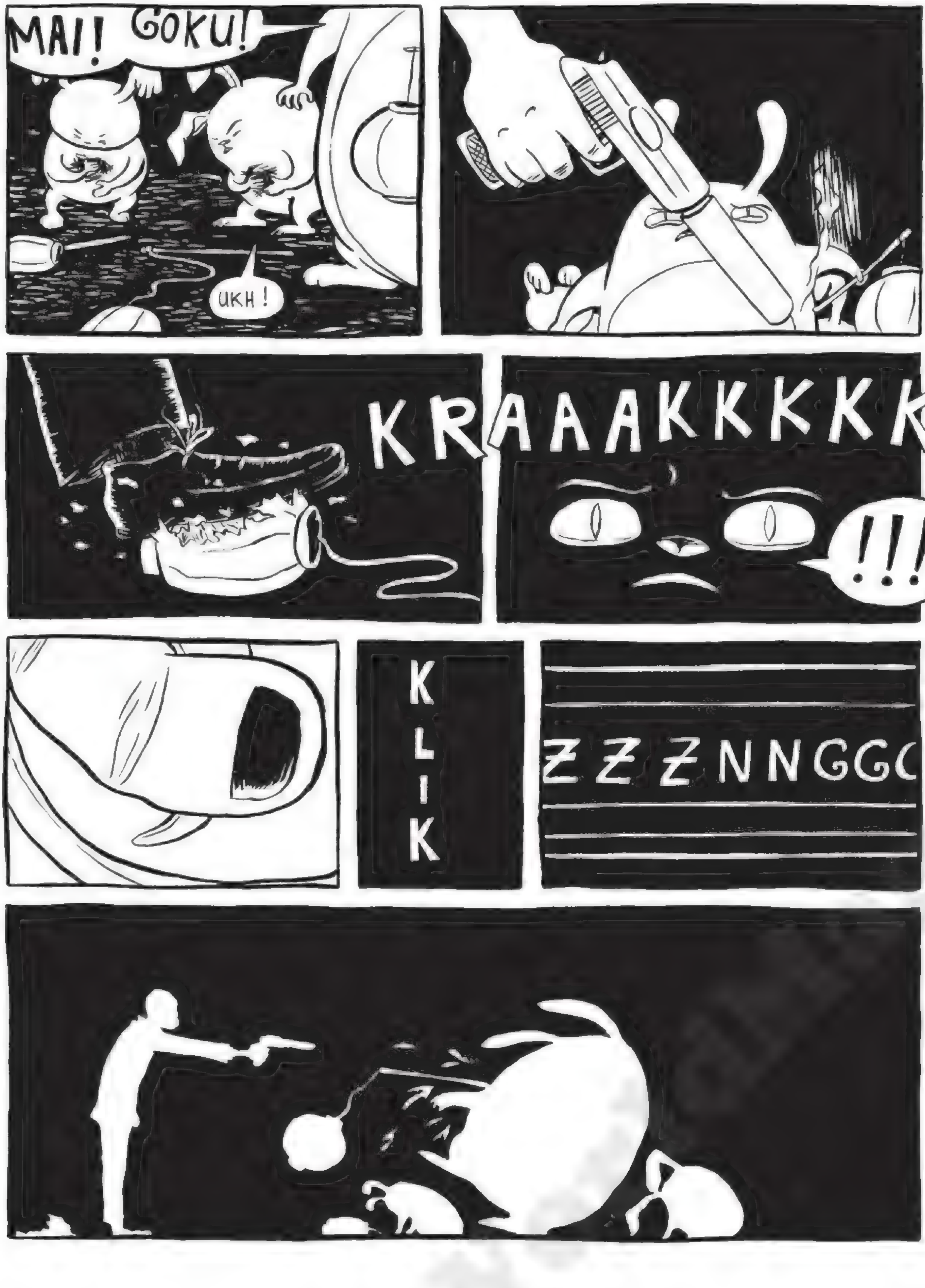

. . BUT FIRST LET ME SHOW YOU A TACTIC CALLED AN 'IMMELMANN TURN'.
A – A CLIMB FOLLOWED BY A HALF-LOOP!
EXACTLY! NOW I AM THE HUNTER AND YOU ARE THE PREY!
AAAGH!
THE NAZI SWINE MOVES IN FOR THE KILL! OUR BROTHER NEEDS HELP –
NO, YAKOB WE PROMISED JOHNNY THAT WE WOULD NOT INTERFERE!
Johnny had survived with just a few cuts . . .
GOTTA . . . HIT THE DECK – TRY AND SHAKE HIM OFF IN THOSE TREES . . .
TEUFEL! I CANNOT CLOSE WITH HIM HE HAS CUNNING, AS WELL AS COURAGE!
IT'S WORKING!
But as Johnny slammed from the mouth of the valley . . .
SUPPLY-CAMP . . . RINGED WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS! I MUST'VE STRAYED ACROSS THE GERMAN LINES!
FEUER! FEUER!
A HIT!
CANNON-SHELL! FEELS LIKE IT'S RIPPED THE FLAP AWAY . . .
. . .AND HERE COMES JURGEN! I . . . I'VE HAD IT!

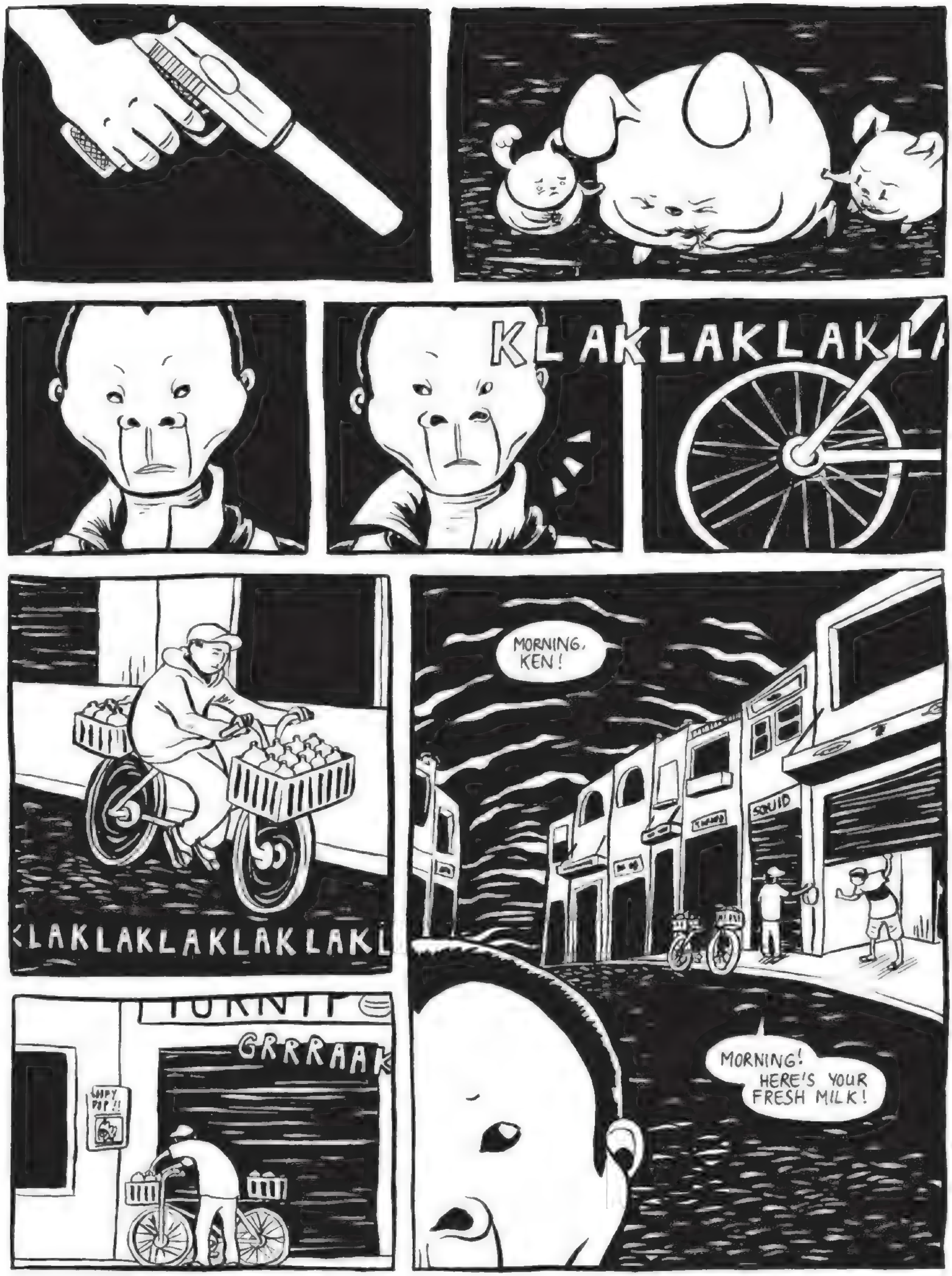

But –
IT IS NOT MY WAY TO MURDER A BRAVE MAN WHO CANNOT DEFEND HIMSELF... SO I GIVE YOU YOUR LIFE....
...BUT ONLY UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN! LET IT BE SOON, JOHNNY ENGLISH!
IT'S MUTUAL, MATE! BLOKES LIKE YOU ARE A BREATH OF CLEAN AIR IN THIS FILTHY WAR... EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A JERRY!
As Jurgen rejoined his comrades and the Messerschmitts flew off...
JOHNNY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? CAN YOU MAKE IT BACK TO BASE?
LIKE A RUBBER DUCK ON ONE WING, ALEX, BUT I'LL MAKE IT.
BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR FRIEND FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR?
COMRADE LYCHENKO IS SAFE. THE TRANSPORT FLEW ON WHILE YOU WERE FIGHTING IT OUT WITH VON JURGEN. IT WILL HAVE LANDED BY NOW.
HELL! THAT MEANS KRASKIN'S PROBABLY GIVING HIM A FULL REPORT ON ME, RIGHT NOW!
Kraskin was a Military Commissar who had developed a crazy, fanatical hatred for Johnny...and at that very moment...
...WELCOME TO LESNAI MUNITIONS' FACTORY, COMRADE LYCHENKO. I HAVE A SERIOUS MATTER TO DISCUSS WITH YOU. IT CONCERNS AN ENGLISH FLIER WHO JOINED THE FALCONS UNDER SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES!
AH! YOU MEAN THE PILOT OF THE HURRICANE, MAJOR KRASKIN...?
HE IS COMING IN NOW... DAMAGED! BUT STILL HE FLIES WITH THE TENACITY THAT I OBSERVED A FEW MOMENTS AGO!
BEFORE YOU TAKE HIM TO THE SICK-BAY, THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST SAY TO HIM...!
COME ON THEN, YOU DESK-BOUND SLAB OF LARD...GET IT OVER WITH!
V.C
But...
WERE IT NOT FOR YOU, ENGLISHMAN, NIKITA LYCHENKO MIGHT BE DEAD! THUS, IT IS MY INTENTION TO RECOMMEND THAT YOU BE DECORATED WITH ONE OF OUR COUNTRY'S GREATEST HONOURS – THE MEDAL OF THE 'ORDER OF LENIN!'
I EXPECT A FIRING-SQUAD, AND THEY GO AND NOMINATE ME FOR A GONG! NO WONDER KRASKIN LOOKS AS IF HE COULD TEAR MY THROAT OUT...
AS LONG AS HE'S ALIVE, THAT MAD DOG IS STILL A DANGER TO ME!

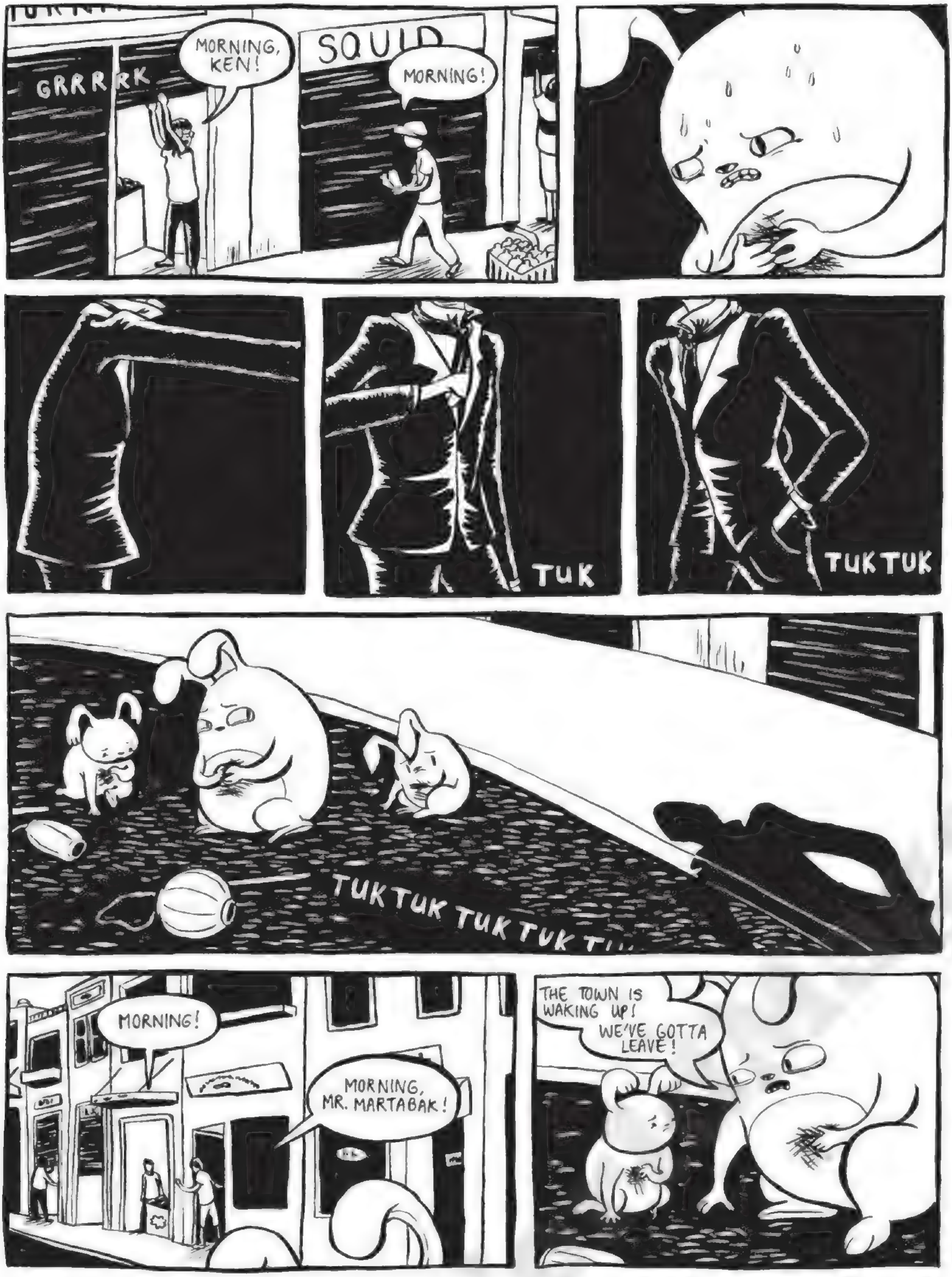

LEAVE CALICO.
IT'S NOT YOURS.
NOT YET.
BUT SOON ENOUGH.
THIS IS PROTECTED LAND.
CCSSSTT

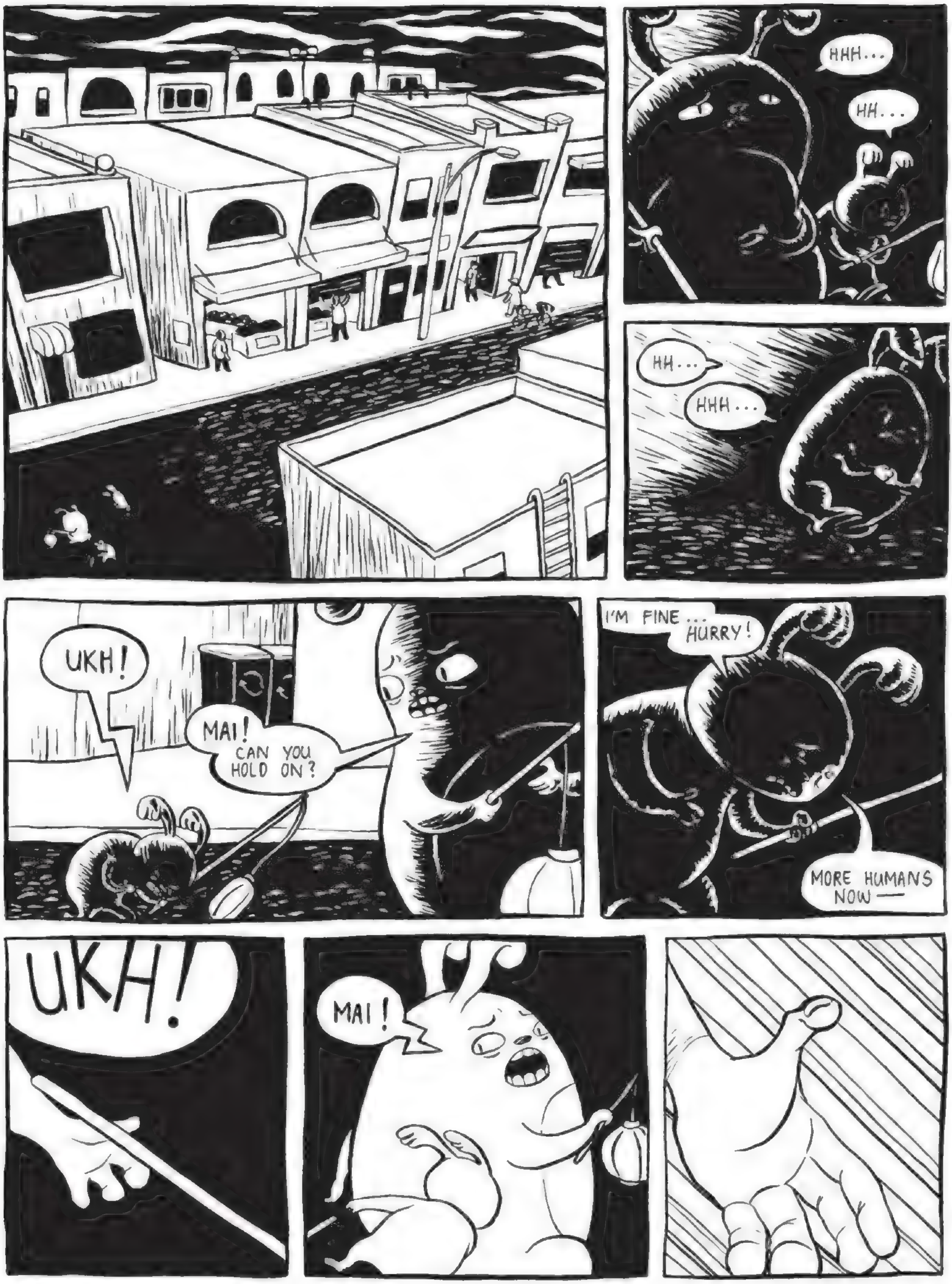

♪ LILLIPUT! LILLIPUT! ♪
包
NANAS
♪ DOOT! DOOT! ♪
包
CAREFUL. IT'S HOT.
THANK YOU, JADEN.
ALTHOUGH, I CAN PUSH MY CART MYSELF.
包
I'M A TOUGH OLD BIRD.
THEY'VE COME, GRANDMAMA.

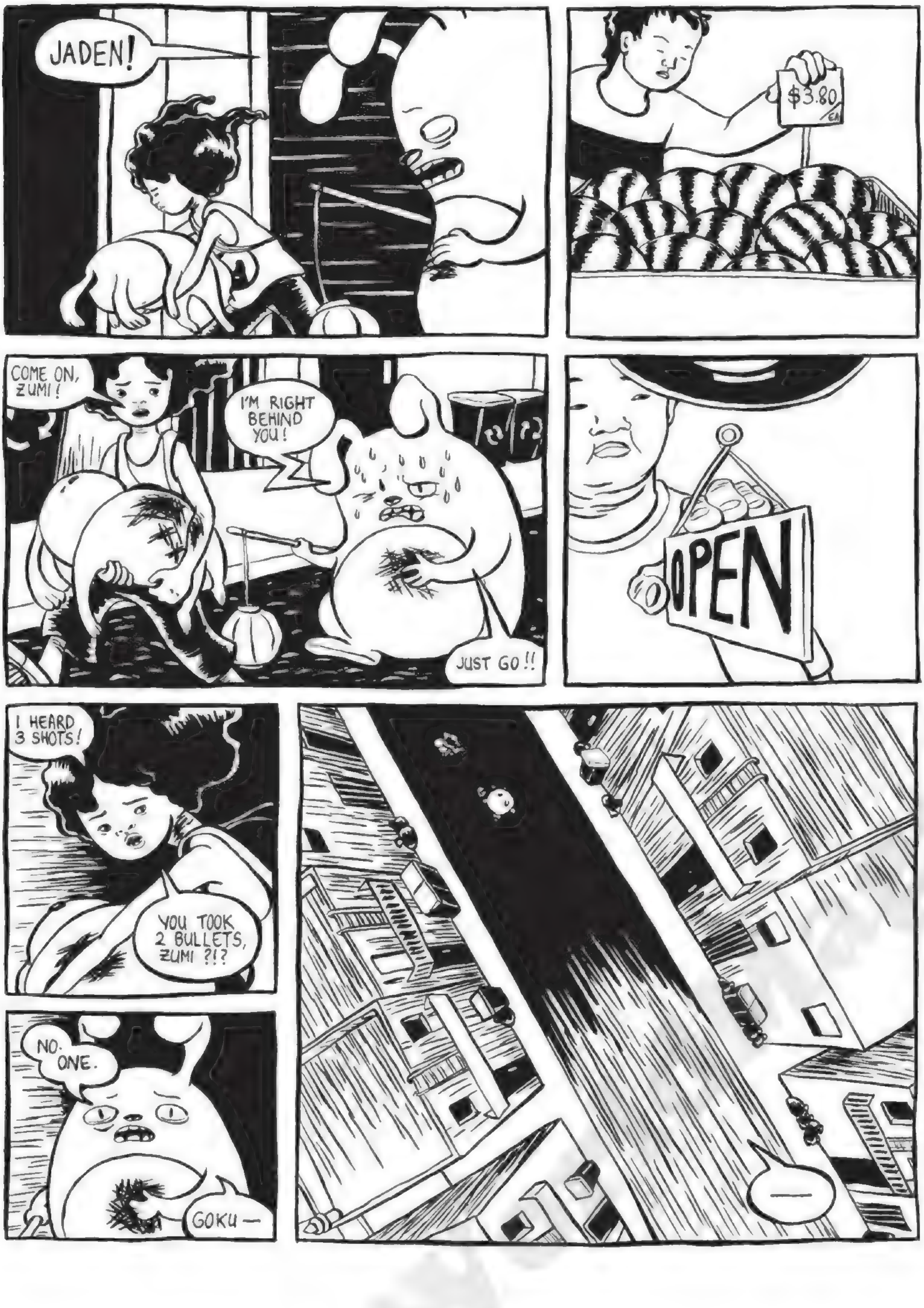

AHHH, I THOUGHT SO...
SAW THEM HEADING UP TO THE FOREST YESTERDAY.
MMM...
THAT'S THE JADEN SPECIAL.
!
EXTRA MUSHROOM—
?
TEP.
SHYuuuu
FIRE
GUST

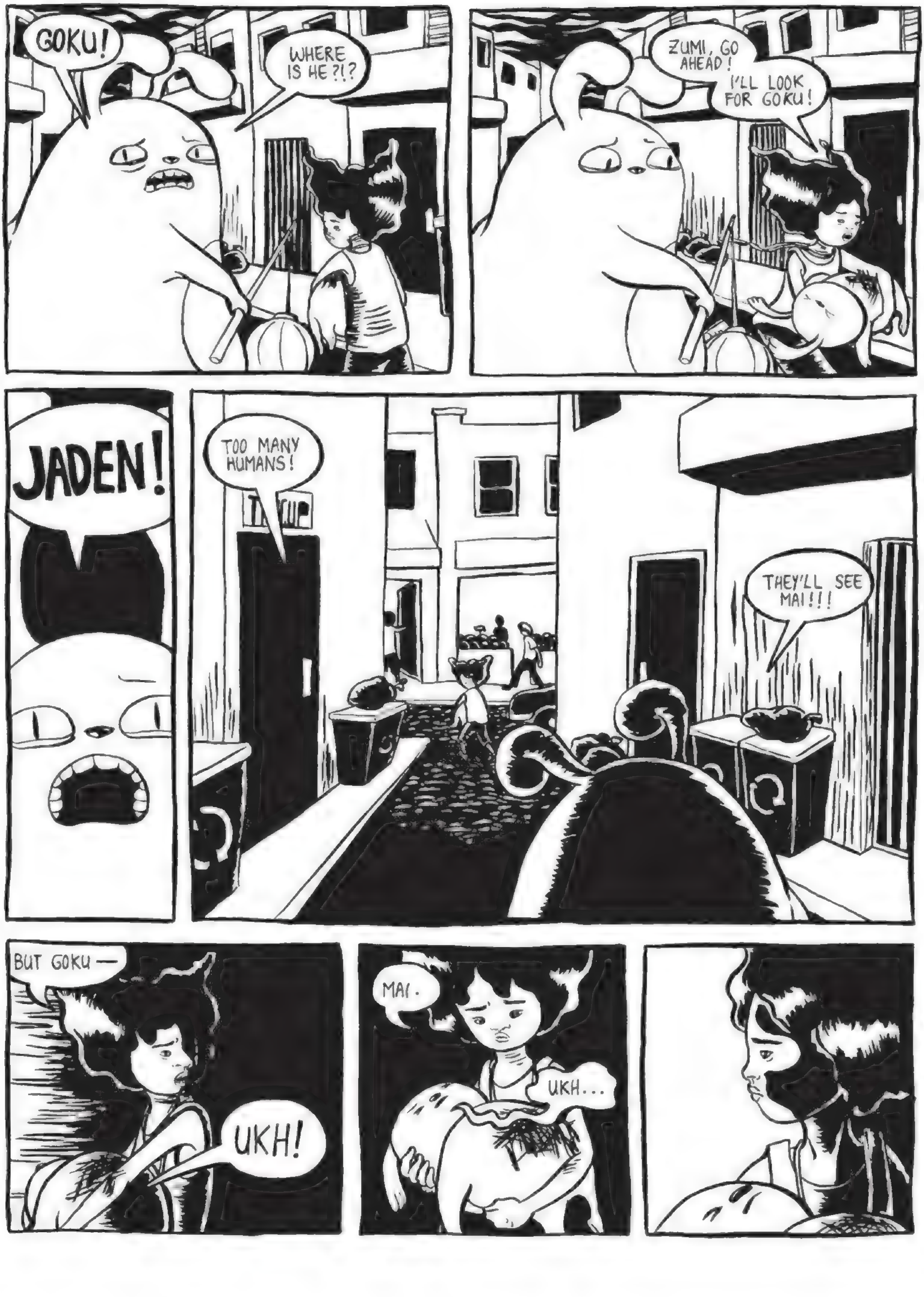

MAI! GOKU!
UKH!
KRAAAKKKKK
!!!
KLIK
ZZZNNGG

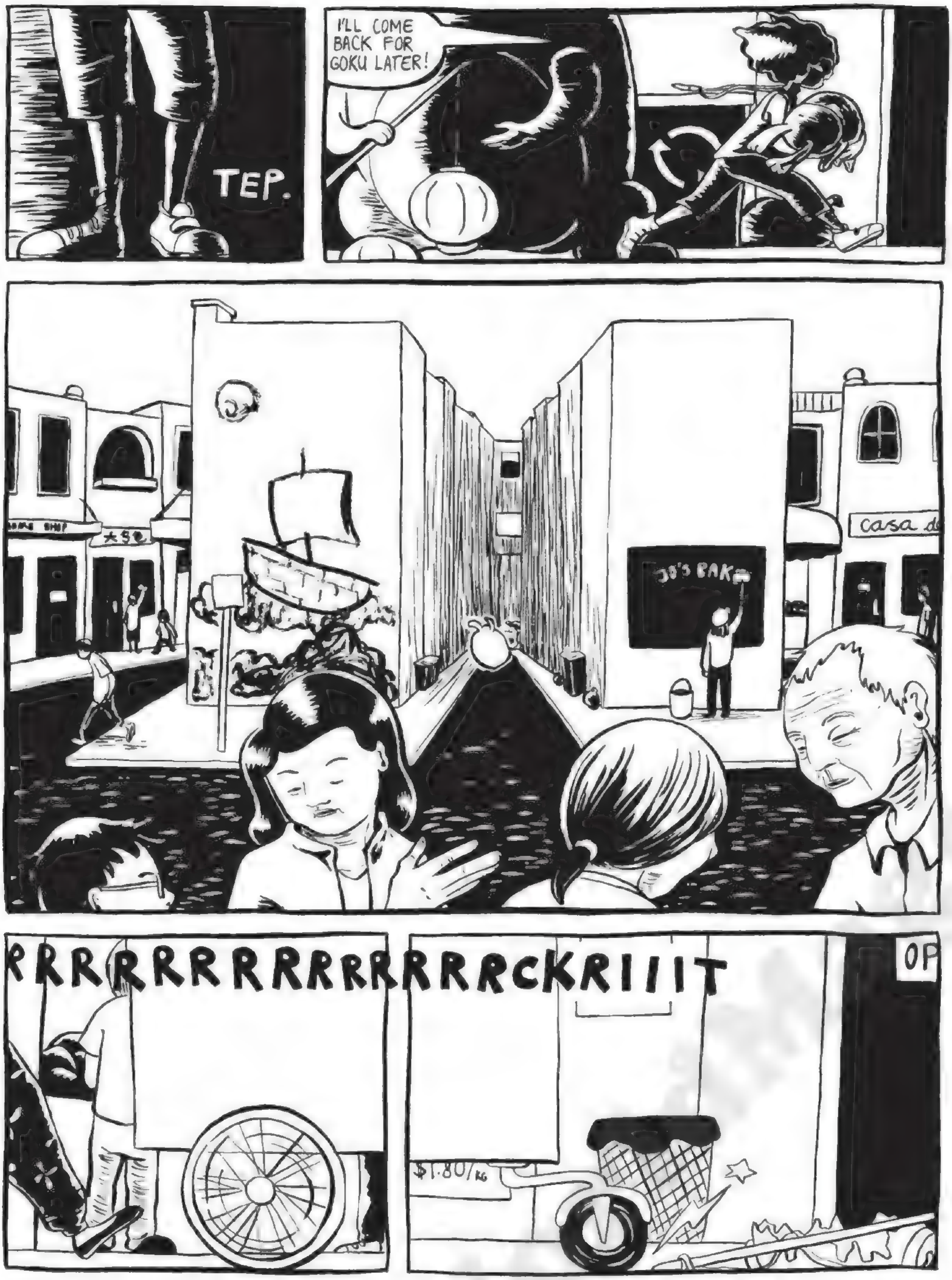

KLAKLAKLAKLA
KLAKLAKLAKLAKL
MORNING, KEN!
SQUID
TURNIP
GRRRAAK
MORNING! HERE'S YOUR FRESH MILK!

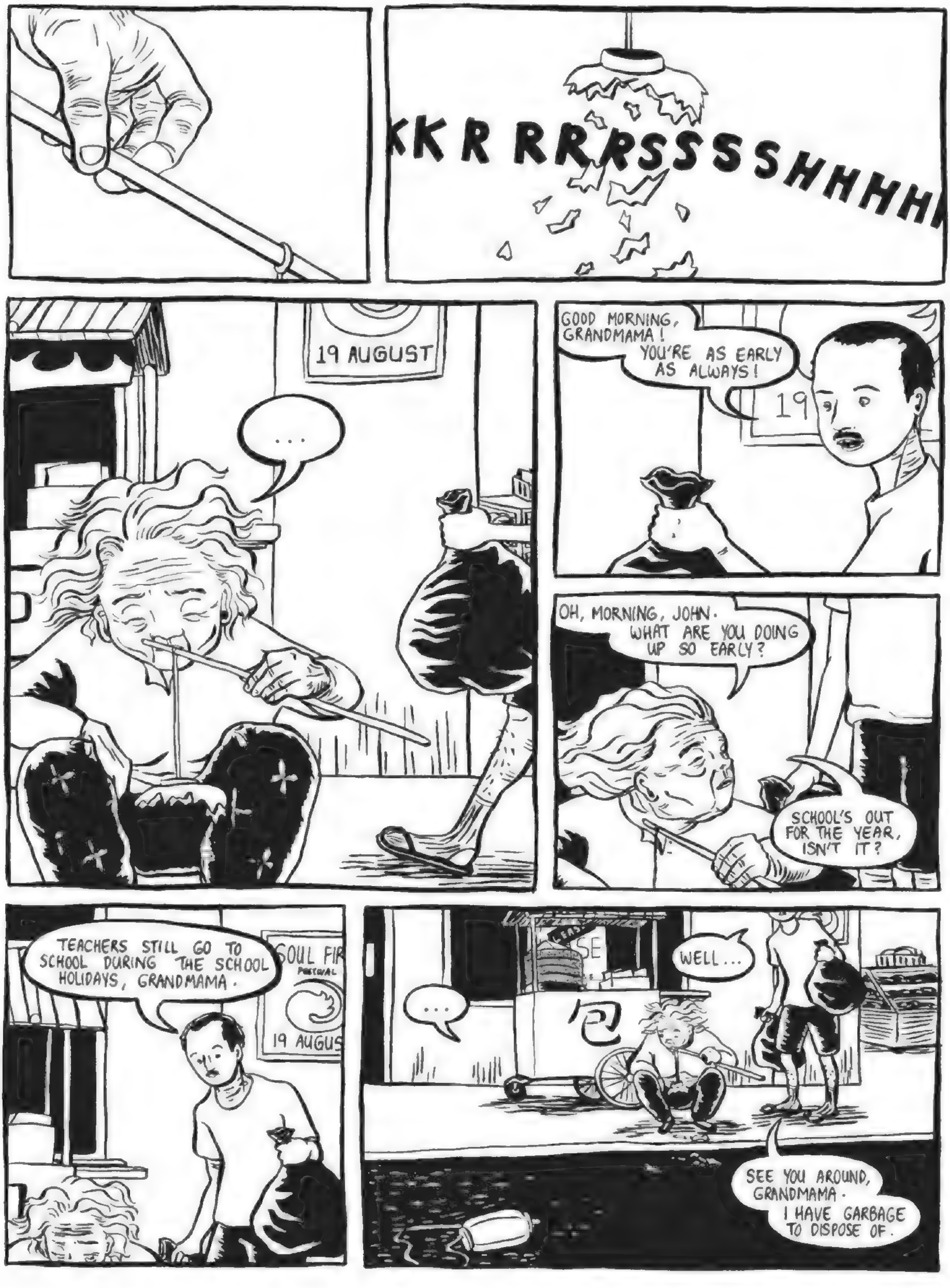

GRRRRK
MORNING, KEN!
SQUID
MORNING!
TUK
TUKTUK
TUK TUK TUK TUK T
MORNING!
MORNING, MR. MARTABAK!
THE TOWN IS WAKING UP!
WE'VE GOTTA LEAVE!

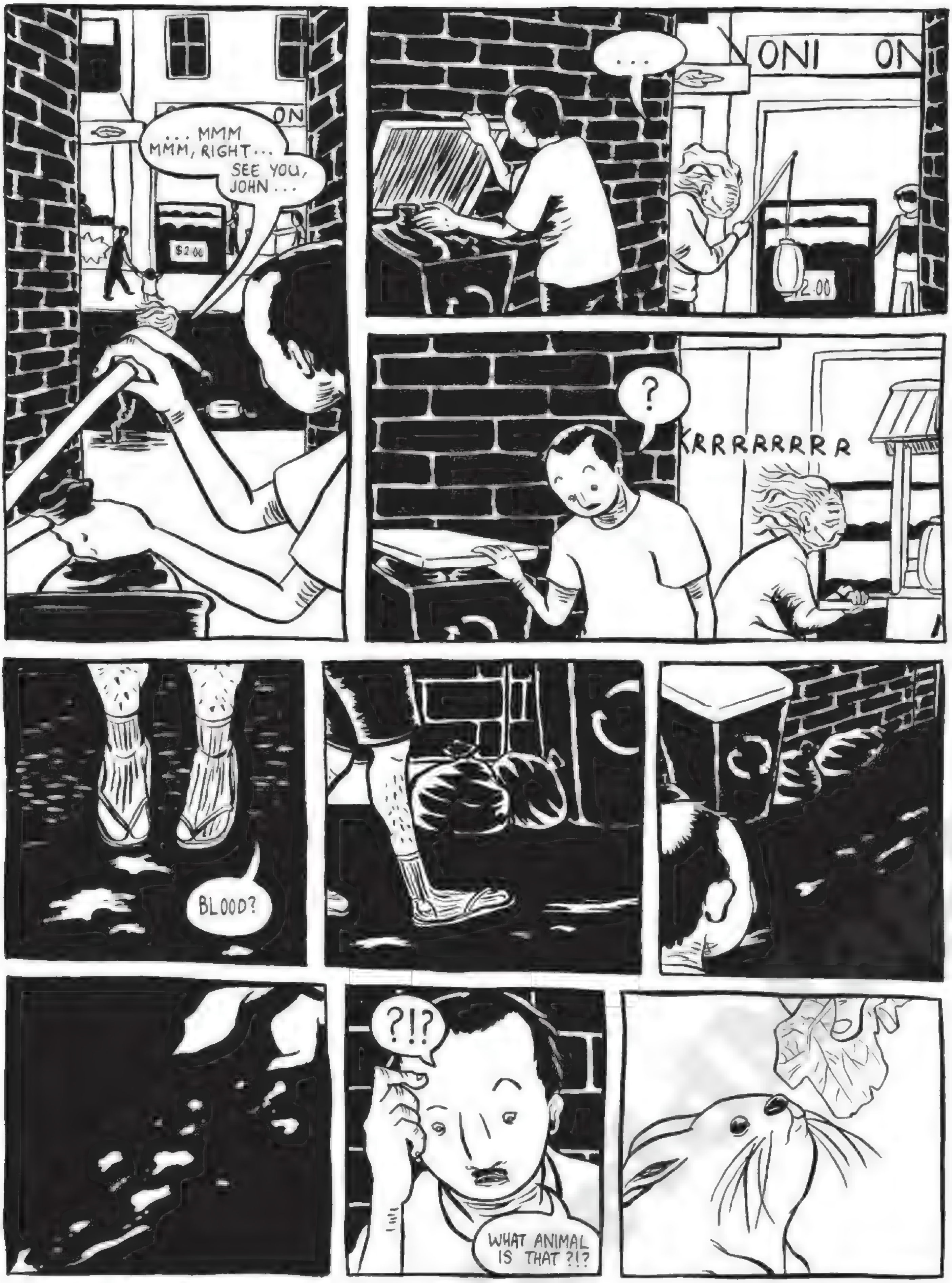

HHH...
HH...
HH...
HHH...
UKH!
MAI! CAN YOU HOLD ON?
I'M FINE... HURRY!
MORE HUMANS NOW—
UKH!
MAI!

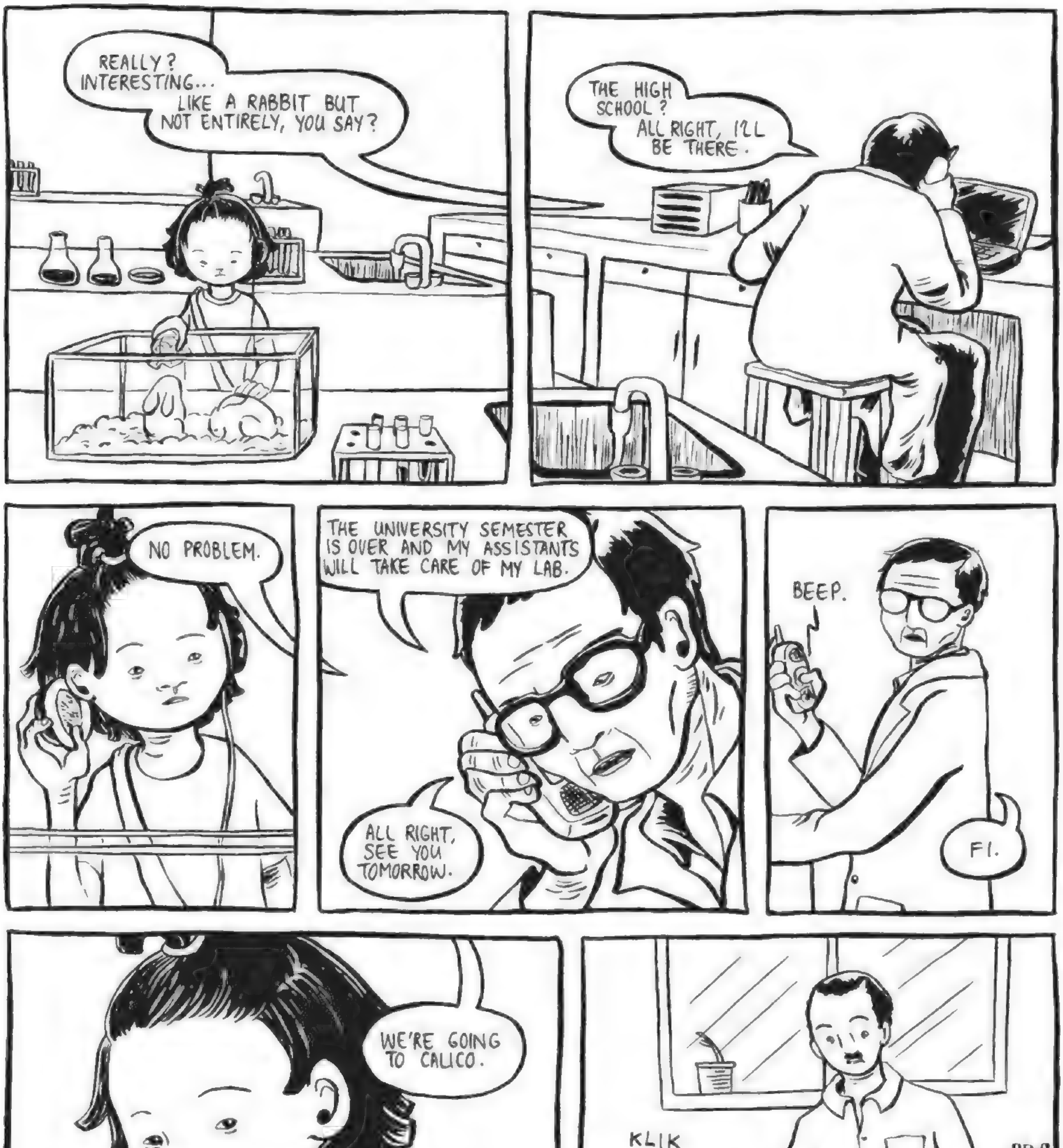

JADEN!
$3.80 /EA
COME ON, ZUMI!
I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!
JUST GO!!
OPEN
I HEARD 3 SHOTS!
YOU TOOK 2 BULLETS, ZUMI ?!?
NO. ONE.
GOKU—
——

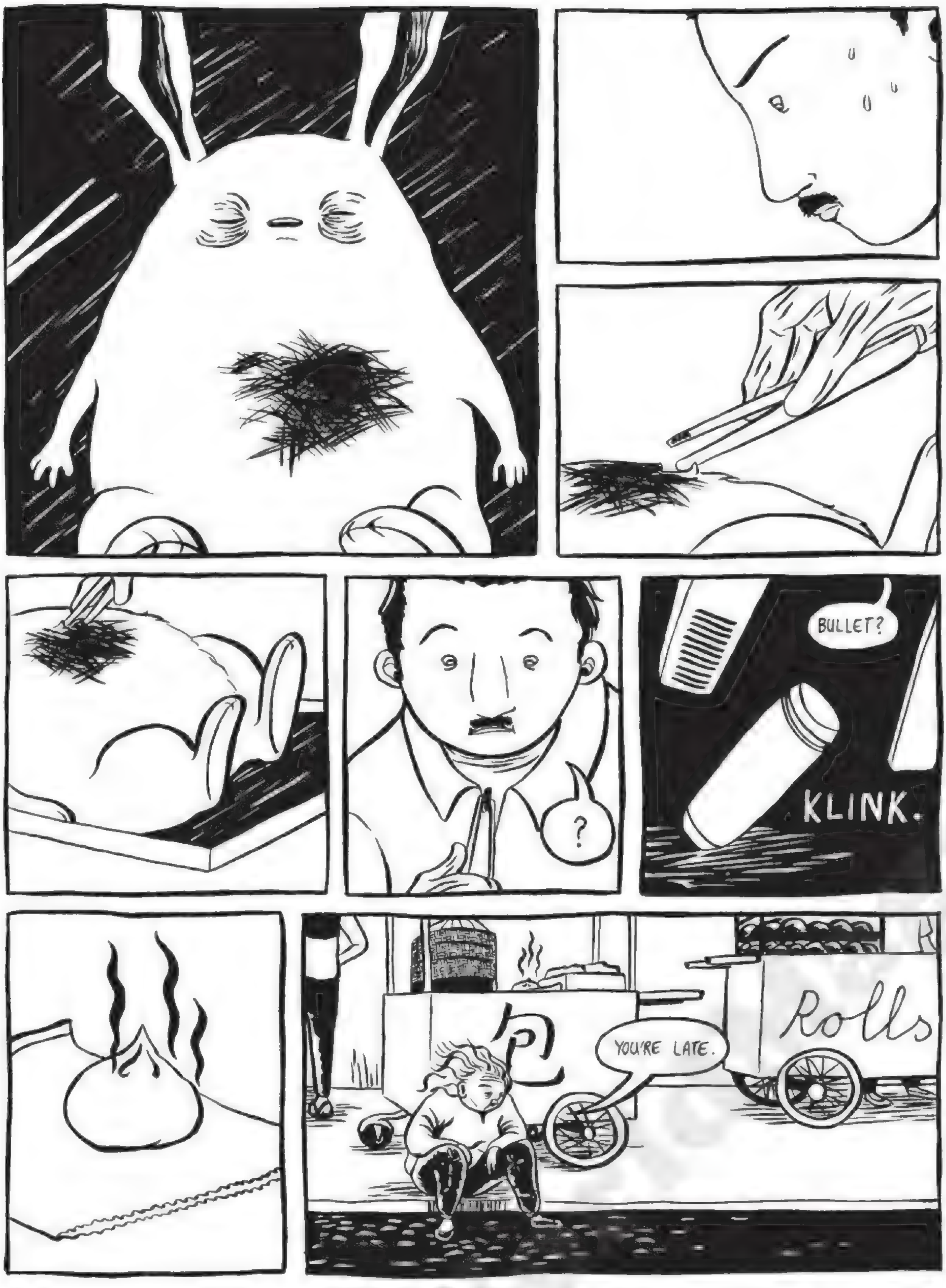

GOKU!
WHERE IS HE?!?
ZUMI, GO AHEAD!
I'LL LOOK FOR GOKU!
JADEN!
TOO MANY HUMANS!
THEY'LL SEE MAI!!!
BUT GOKU —
UKH!
MAI.
UKH...

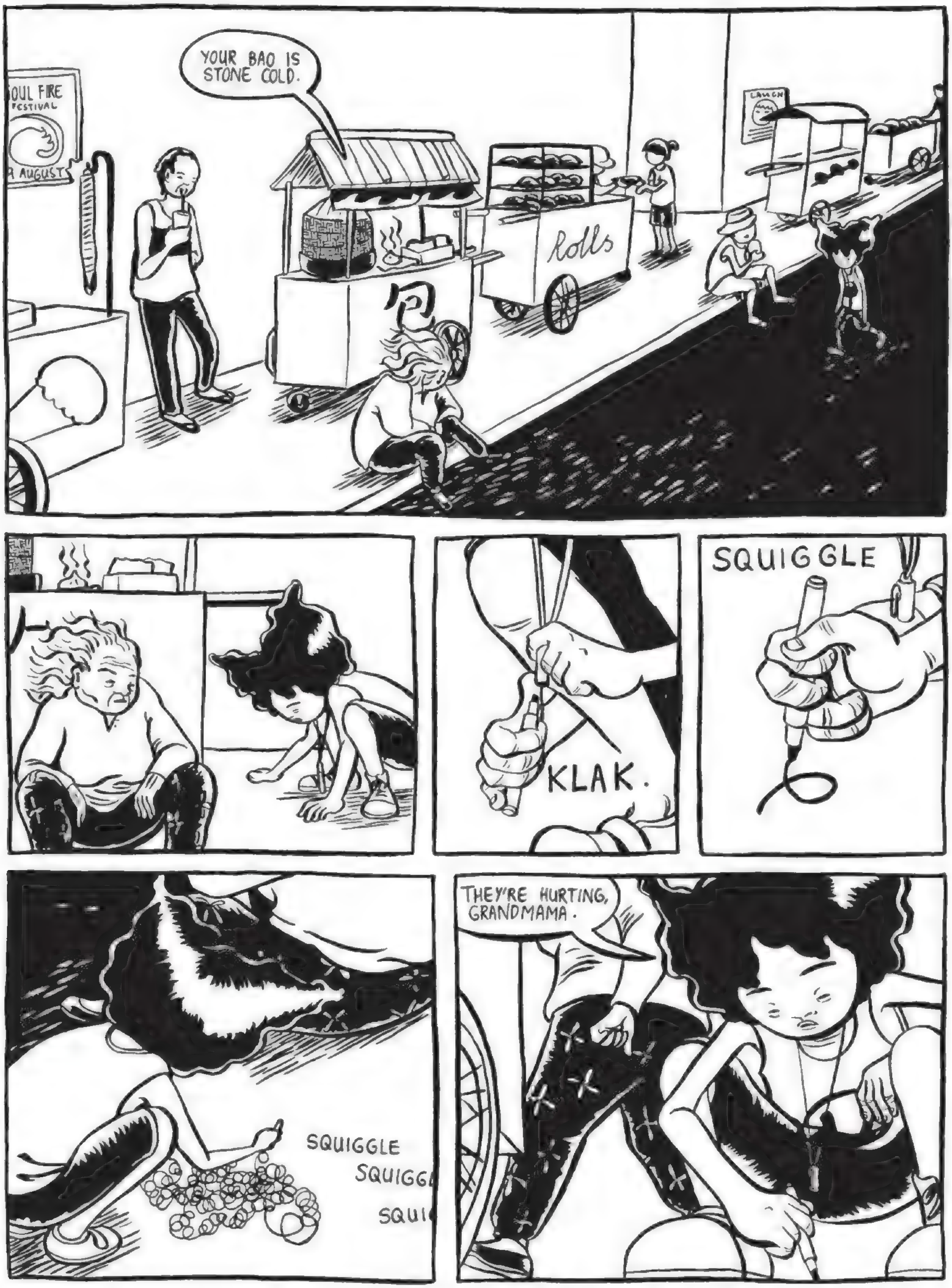

TEP.
I'LL COME BACK FOR GOKU LATER!
casa de
JO'S BAK
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRCKRIIIT
OP
$1.80/kg

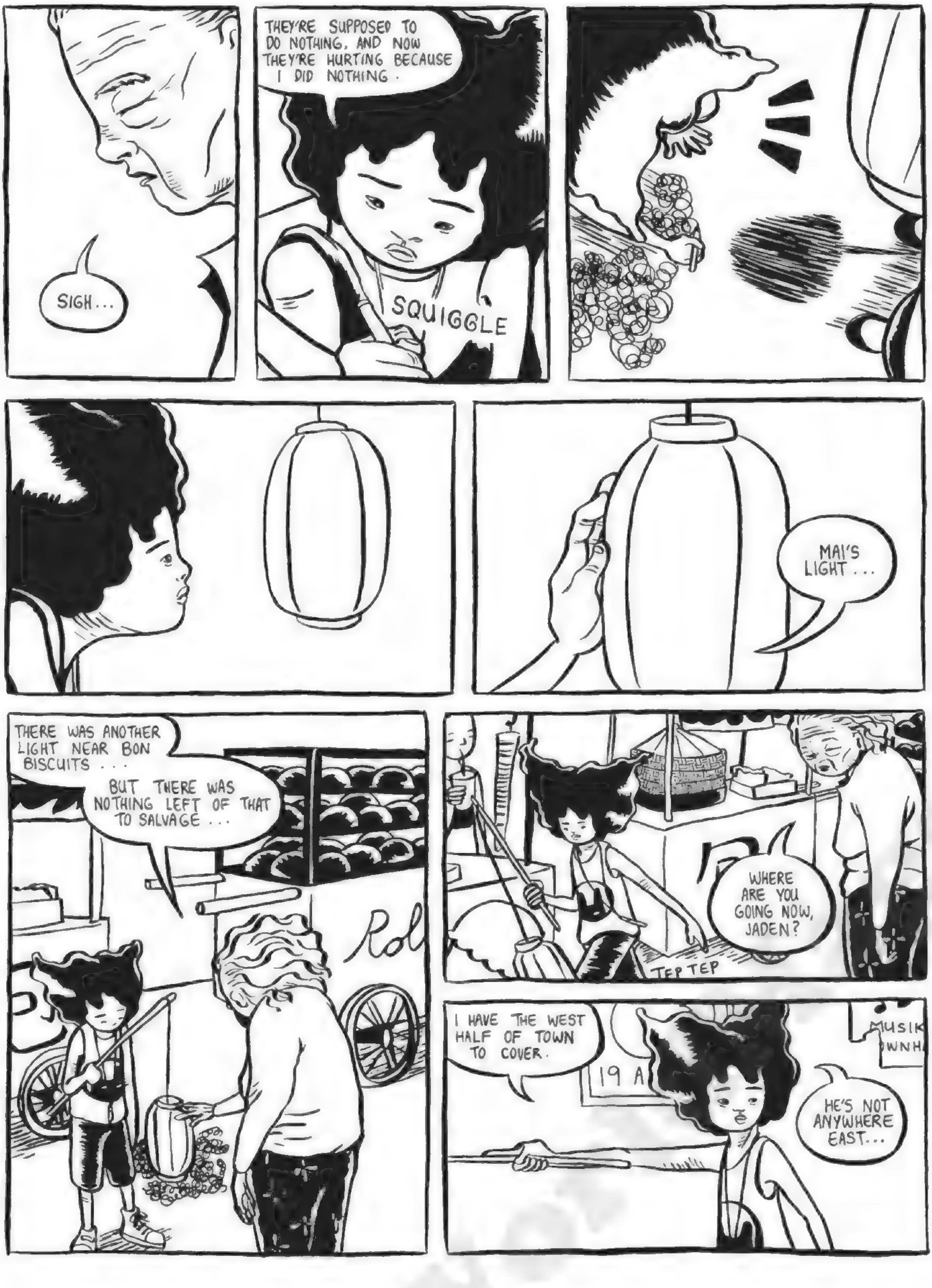

KKRRRRSSSSSHHHHH
19 AUGUST
...
19
GOOD MORNING, GRANDMAMA! YOU'RE AS EARLY AS ALWAYS!
OH, MORNING, JOHN. WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP SO EARLY?
SCHOOL'S OUT FOR THE YEAR, ISN'T IT?
TEACHERS STILL GO TO SCHOOL DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, GRANDMAMA.
SOUL FIR
FESTIVAL
19 AUGUS
...
WELL...
包
SEE YOU AROUND, GRANDMAMA. I HAVE GARBAGE TO DISPOSE OF.

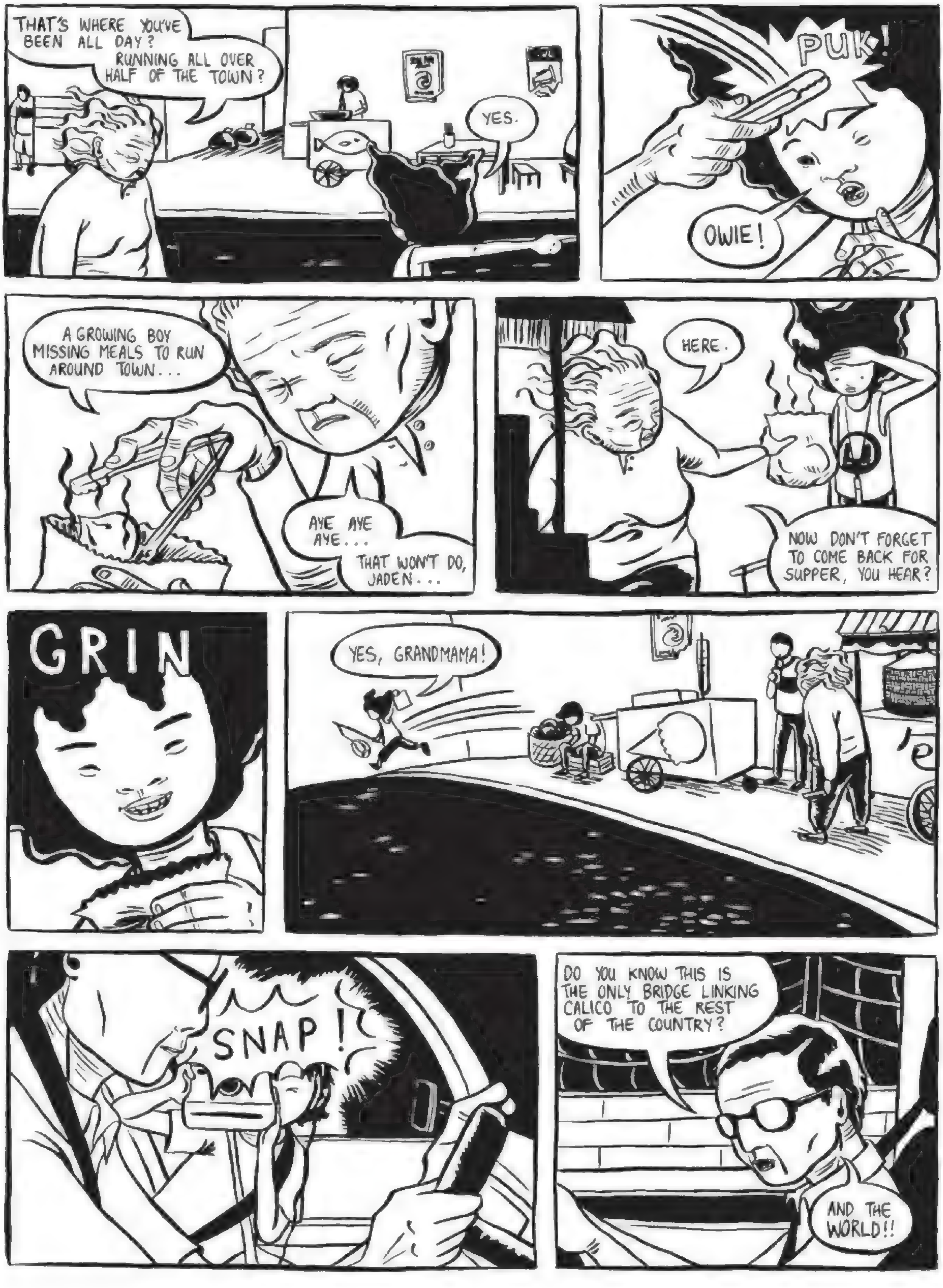

ON
... MMM MMM, RIGHT... SEE YOU, JOHN...
$2.00
...
ONI ON
2.00
?
KRRRRRRRR
BLOOD?
?!?
WHAT ANIMAL IS THAT ?!?

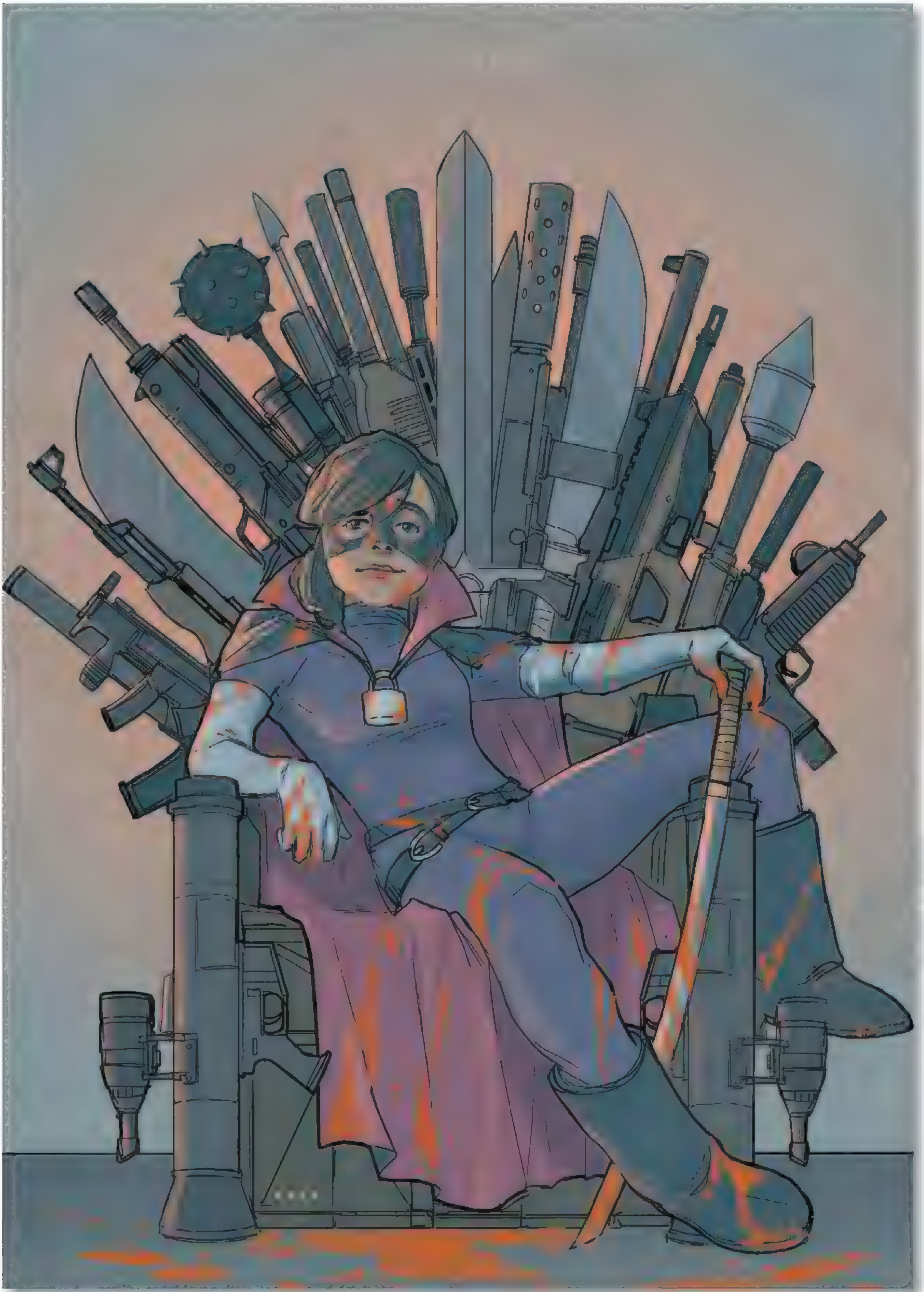

REALLY? INTERESTING... LIKE A RABBIT BUT NOT ENTIRELY, YOU SAY?
THE HIGH SCHOOL? ALL RIGHT, I'LL BE THERE.
NO PROBLEM.
THE UNIVERSITY SEMESTER IS OVER AND MY ASSISTANTS WILL TAKE CARE OF MY LAB.
ALL RIGHT, SEE YOU TOMORROW.
BEEP.
FI.
WE'RE GOING TO CALICO.
KLIK


?
BULLET?
KLINK.
Rolls
YOU'RE LATE.


OUL FIRE
FESTIVAL
AUGUST
YOUR BAO IS STONE COLD.
包
Rolls
SQUIGGLE
KLAK.
SQUIGGLE
SQUIGG
SQUI
THEY'RE HURTING, GRANDMAMA.


SIGH...
THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO NOTHING, AND NOW THEY'RE HURTING BECAUSE I DID NOTHING.
SQUIGGLE
MAI'S LIGHT...
THERE WAS ANOTHER LIGHT NEAR BON BISCUITS...
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT OF THAT TO SALVAGE...
Rol
WHERE ARE YOU GOING NOW, JADEN?
TEP TEP
I HAVE THE WEST HALF OF TOWN TO COVER.
19 A
MUSIK
WNH
HE'S NOT ANYWHERE EAST...


THAT'S WHERE YOU'VE BEEN ALL DAY?
RUNNING ALL OVER HALF OF THE TOWN?
YES.
PUK!
OWIE!
A GROWING BOY MISSING MEALS TO RUN AROUND TOWN...
AYE AYE AYE...
THAT WON'T DO, JADEN...
HERE.
NOW DON'T FORGET TO COME BACK FOR SUPPER, YOU HEAR?
GRIN
YES, GRANDMAMA!
SNAP!
DO YOU KNOW THIS IS THE ONLY BRIDGE LINKING CALICO TO THE REST OF THE COUNTRY?
AND THE WORLD!!

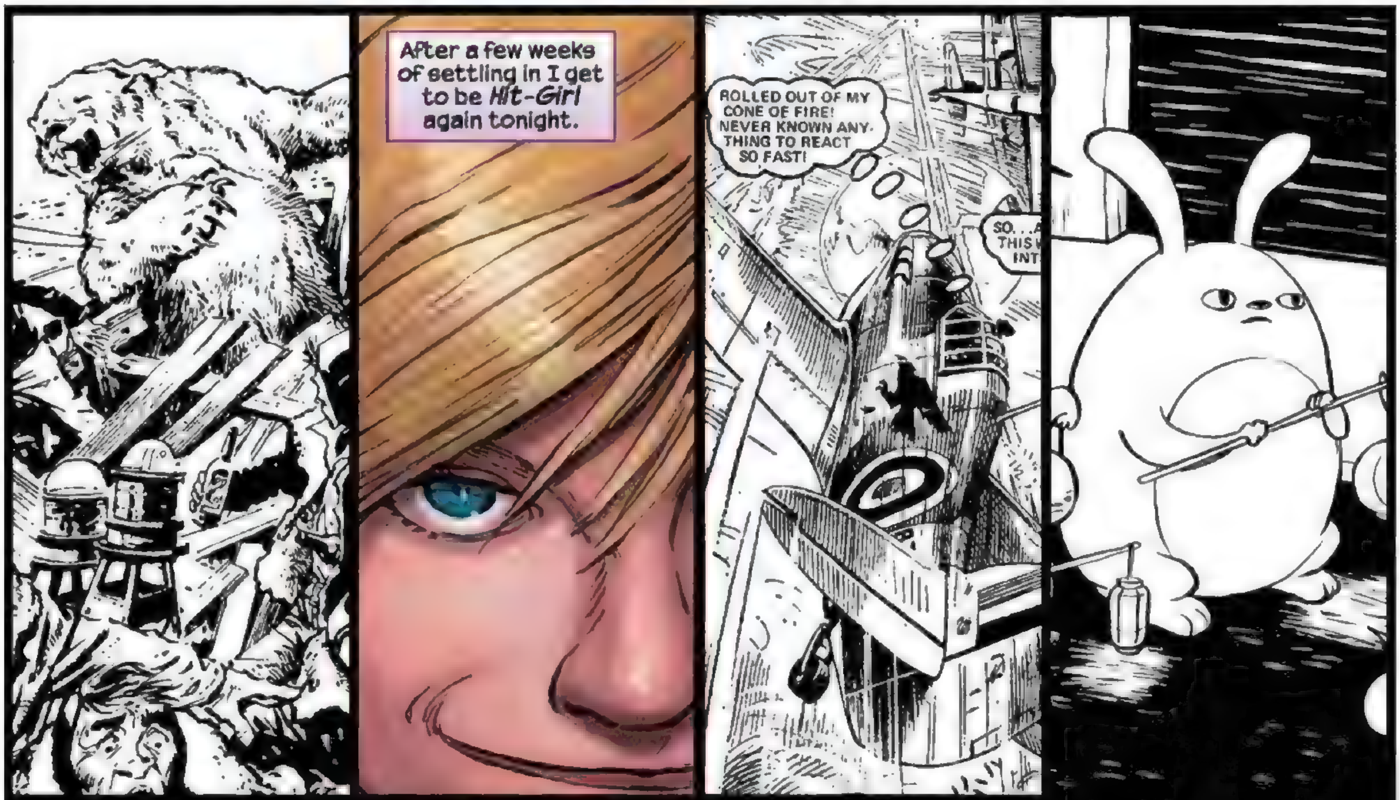


Hit-Girl
Titan Books / Out January / £16.99

GIANT-SIZE SIDEKICK

NEW! FANTASTIC! EXCITING AS A RAGING BEAR!

Sidekick settles into its super-sized groove, more blood-spattered than ever...


After a few weeks of settling in I get to be *Hit-Girl* again tonight.
ROLLED OUT OF MY CONE OF FIRE! NEVER KNOWN ANYTHING TO REACT SO FAST!

Inside the third issue of your new, improved Giant-Size Sidekick...

Claws scything through ice and bone both, Shako – the raging polar bear from *2000 AD*'s raw early years – returns in a new graphic novel collection of the entire original series, and as lead strip in *Giant-Size Sidekick*. Few bears have ever headed the CIA's death list, but Shako is no ordinary beast: he knows anger, he knows fear, and now he has a taste for human flesh. (Plus, he's swallowed something very top secret indeed, and the spooks want it back.) This is classic Brit-comic action, back from the days when the violence came first!

Also in this issue:
We've got another cast-iron classic from the gritty, glorious '70s reinvention of British comics: *Johnny Red* from the mighty *Battle*, the adventures of a stray RAF Hurricane pilot fighting alongside the Russians on the Eastern Front. Then there's *Hit-Girl* – one of the true break-out stars of recent years – in an early, potty-mouthed slice of her own series, plus *August Moon*, a magical adventure full of giant talking rabbit-creatures and strange street urchins. What's new-girl-in-town Fiona Gan to do?

Shako

Hit-Girl

Johnny Red

August Moon

COMIC HEROES PRESENTS

LOCAL HEROES

Sneak previews of hot new releases from SelfMadeHero

Chicago jazz zombies!

Deadbeats

Spooky Swiss hospitals!

Pachyderme

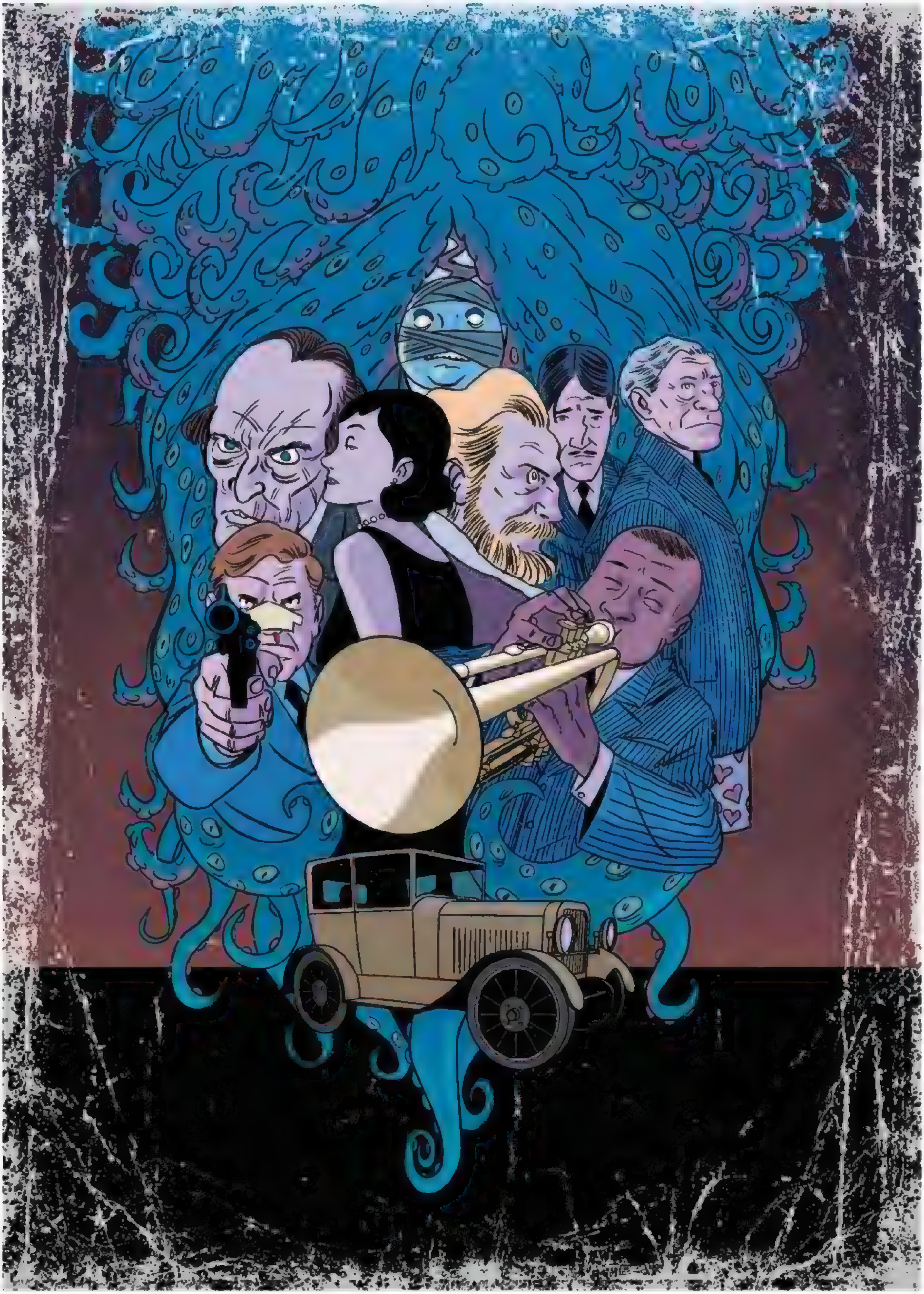
Polish explorers!

We Won't See Auschwitz

Sun seekers!

Miller & Pynchon

Comic Heroes Presents #3
Free with Comic Heroes #13
January/February 2013

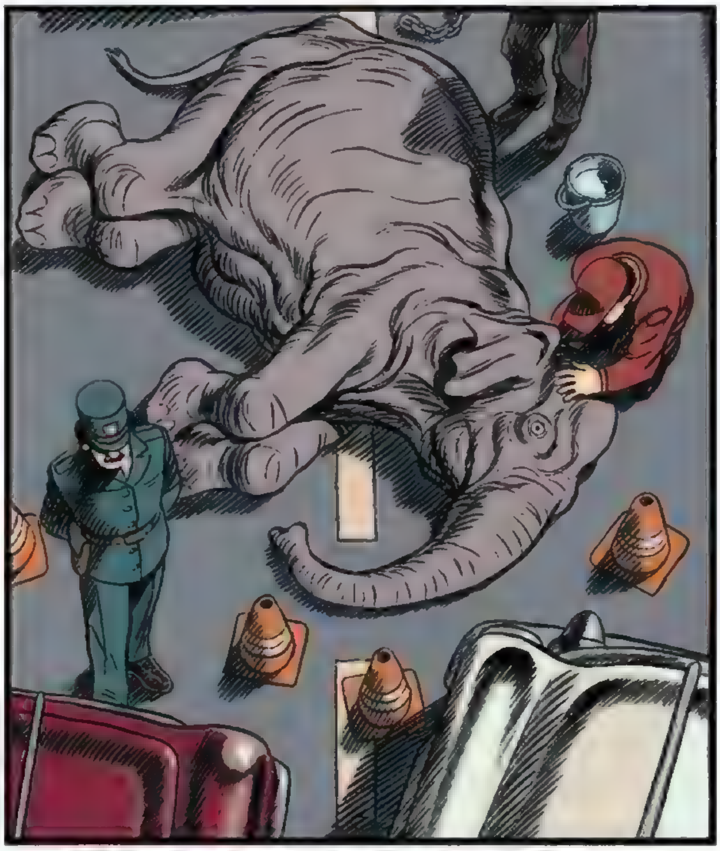


Deadbeats SelfMadeHero / 128 pages / Out now

COMIC HEROES PRESENTS

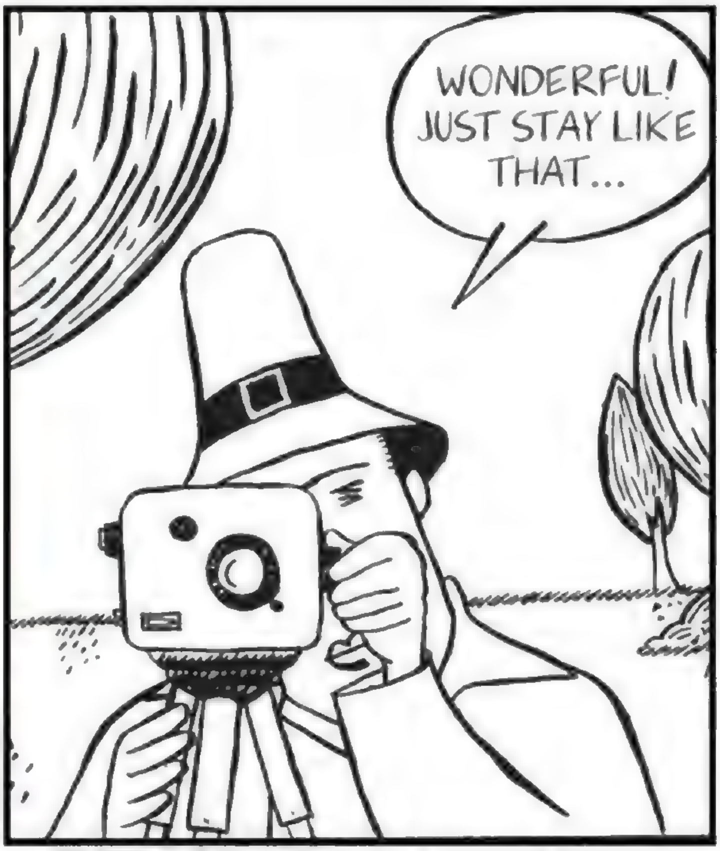
#3 January/February 2013

Inside this issue



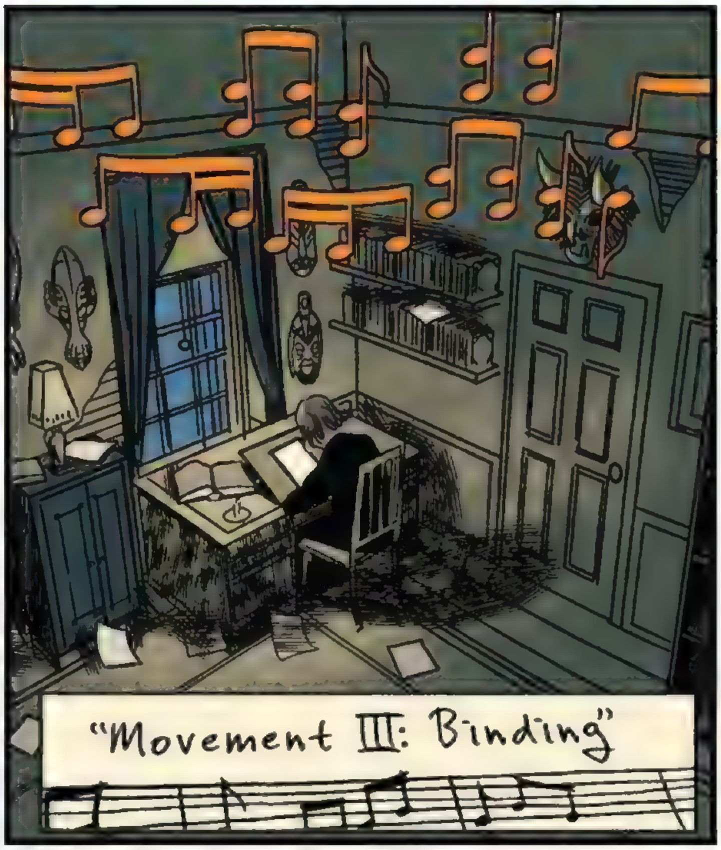
© Frederick Peeters

05 Pachyderme by Frederick Peeters


WONDERFUL! JUST STAY LIKE THAT...

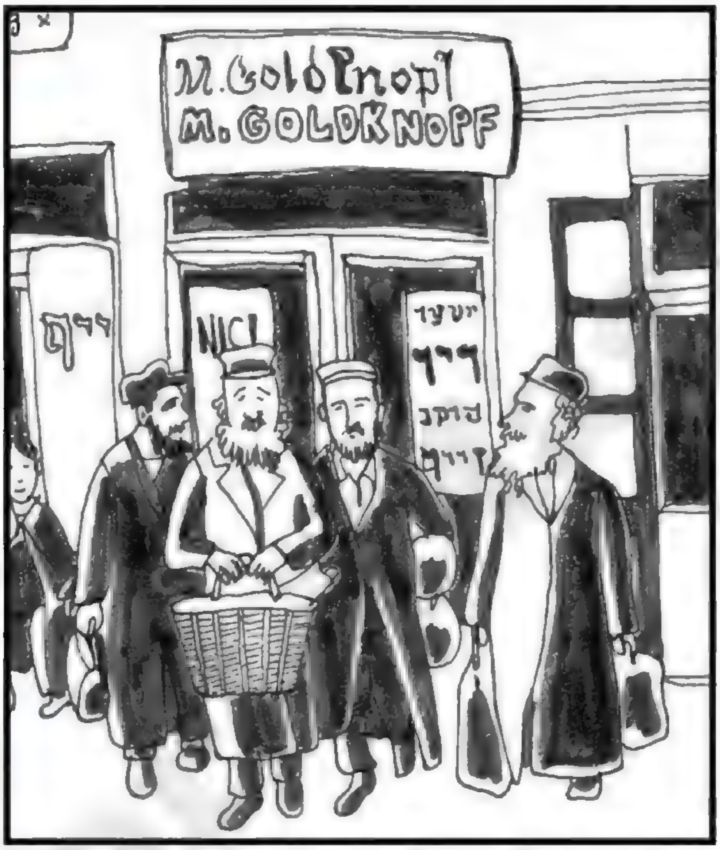
© Leopold Maurer

11 Miller & Pynchon by Leopold Maurer


"Movement III: Binding"

© Chad Fifer, Chris Lackey & INJ Culbard

19 Deadbeats by Chad Fifer, Chris Lackey & INJ Culbard


M. Goldknopf
M. GOLDKNOPF

© Jérémie Dres

27 We Won't See Auschwitz by Jérémie Dres

In this issue's Comic Heroes Presents

Pachyderme

PACHYDERME

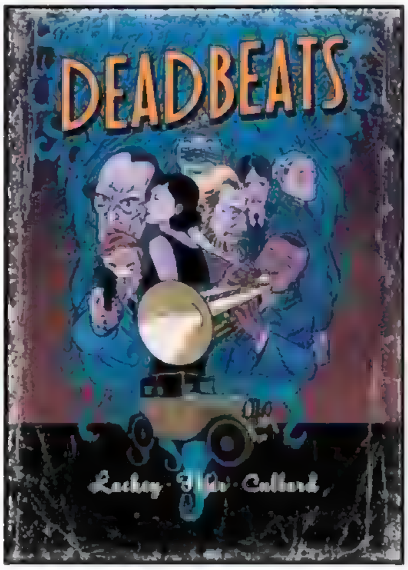
THE SET-UP: We're in Switzerland, early '50s, and there's been a car accident; heroine Carice's husband is stuck in hospital, but the world seems to be conspiring against her visiting him...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? There's a traffic jam, and life's about to get very strange indeed...
TELL ME MORE: Peeters is a rising star of European comics; he's been nominated for best book at Angoulême five times.
Written and drawn by: Frederick Peeters
Publisher: SelfMadeHero
© Frederick Peeters

Miller & Pynchon

MILLER & PYNCHON

THE SET-UP: Two men, one pragmatic and debauched, the other romantic and melancholy, try to calculate the distance between Earth and sun. But things are about to go a little off piste...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? It all gets a tiny bit weird...
TELL ME MORE: Vienna-based Leopold Maurer works in animation, illustration and comics; he's influenced by the great novel, *Mason & Dixon*, by Thomas Pynchon.
Written and drawn by: Leopold Maurer
Publisher: SelfMadeHero
© Leopold Maurer

Deadbeats

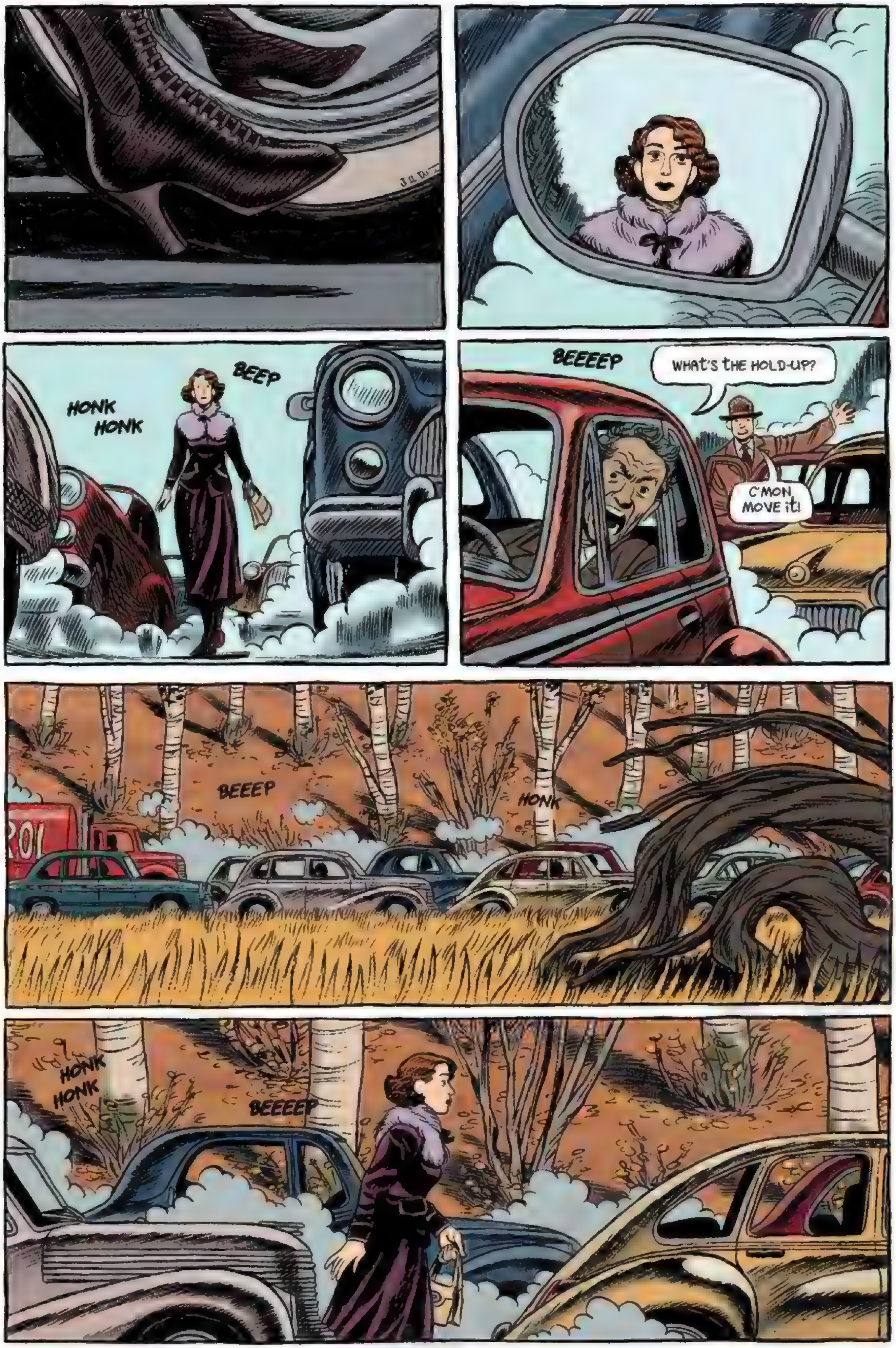


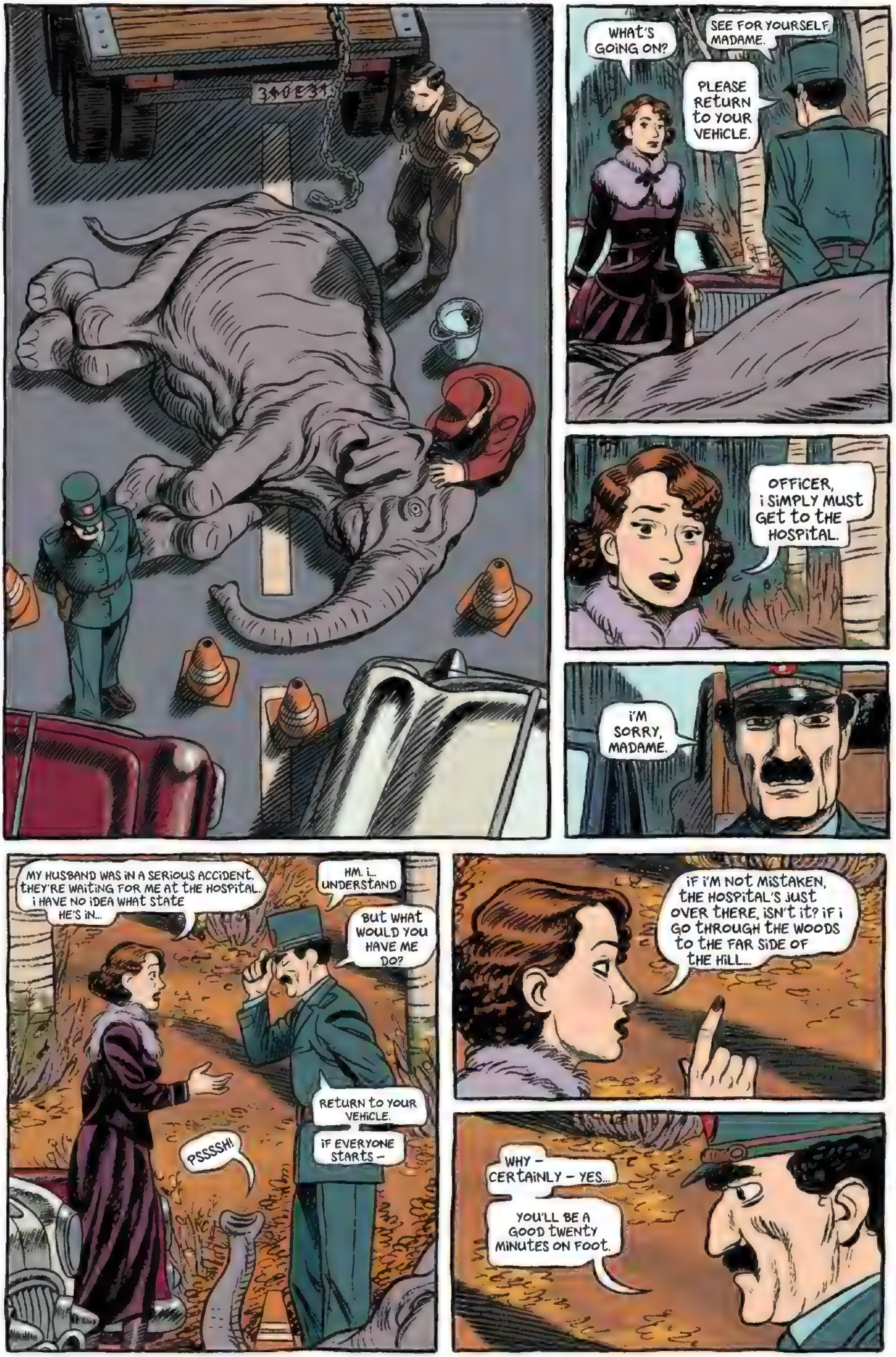
THE SET-UP: Three '20s jazz musicians have fallen foul of the Chicago mob, but in the backwoods of Illinois they find things getting more dangerous yet. And much odder...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? Taking a job playing at the funeral of the wife of an elderly churchman is a safe gig, right...?
TELL ME MORE: These creators, all HP Lovecraft experts, bring their own take on dark, tentacled weirdness; Culbard, in particular, is one of comics' rising stars.
Written by: Chad Fifer, Chris Lackey
Drawn by: INJ Culbard
Publisher: SelfMadeHero
© Chad Fifer, Chris Lackey & INJ Culbard

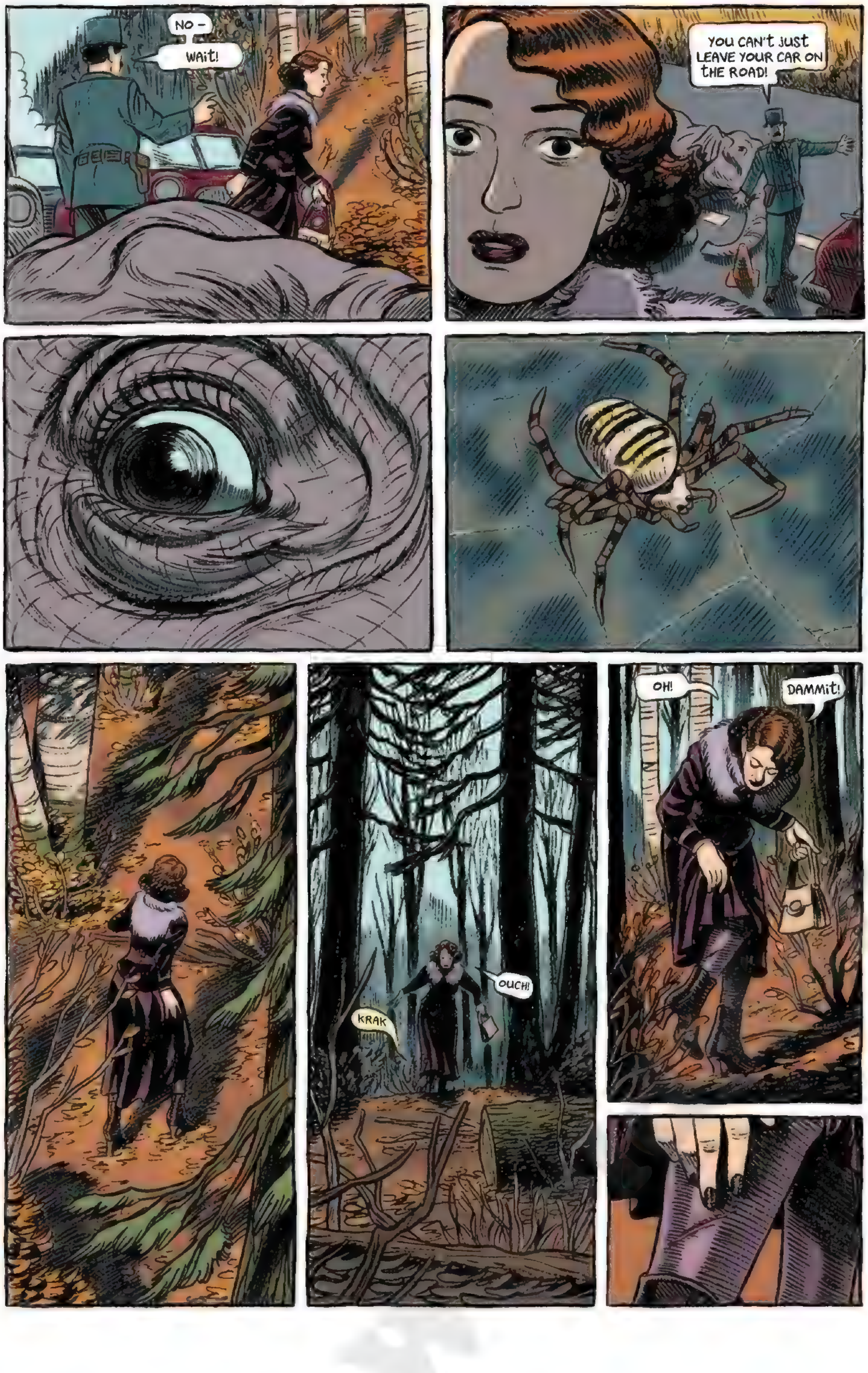
We Won't See Auschwitz

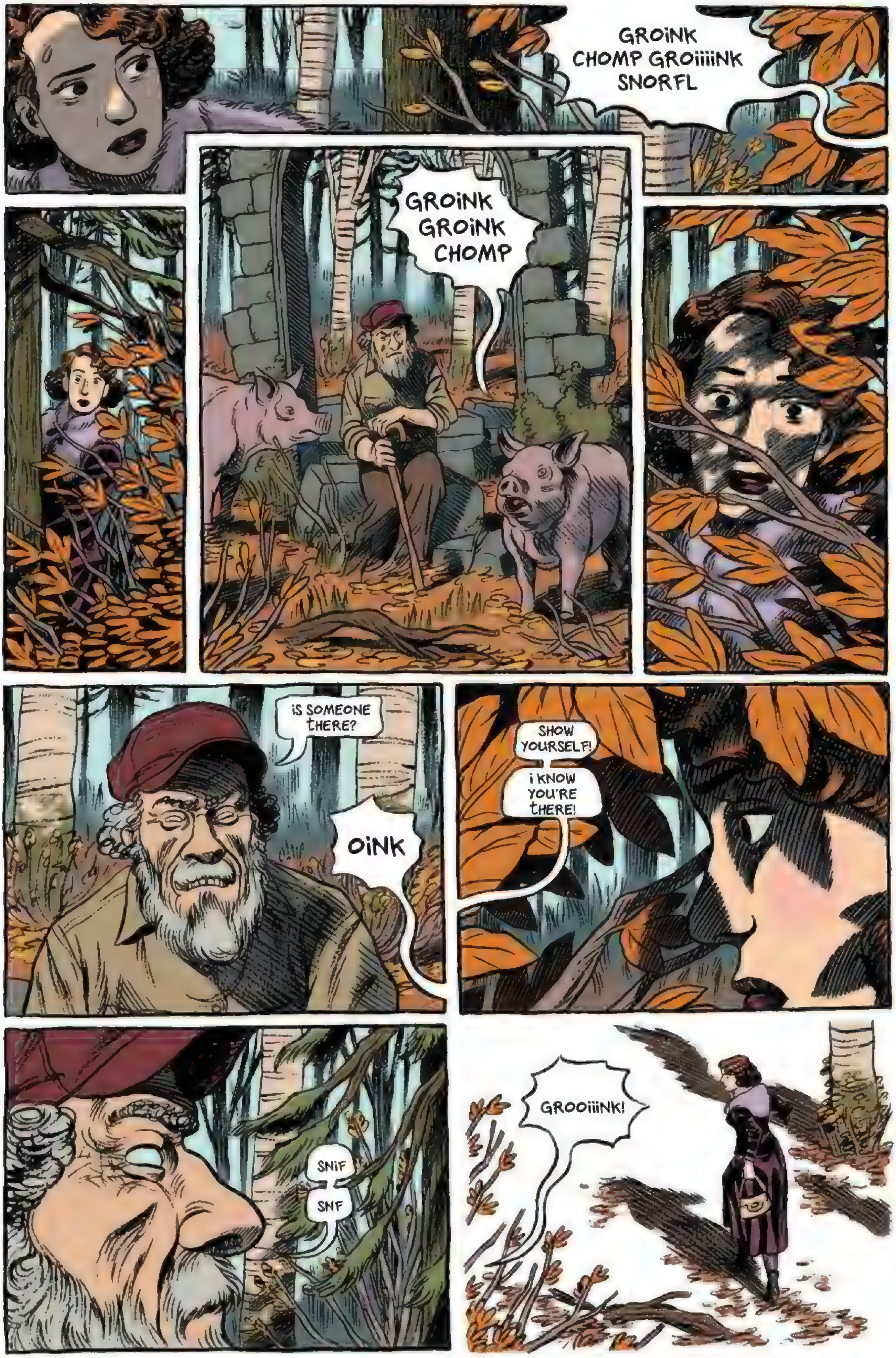
Jérémie Dres
WE WON'T SEE AUSCHWITZ

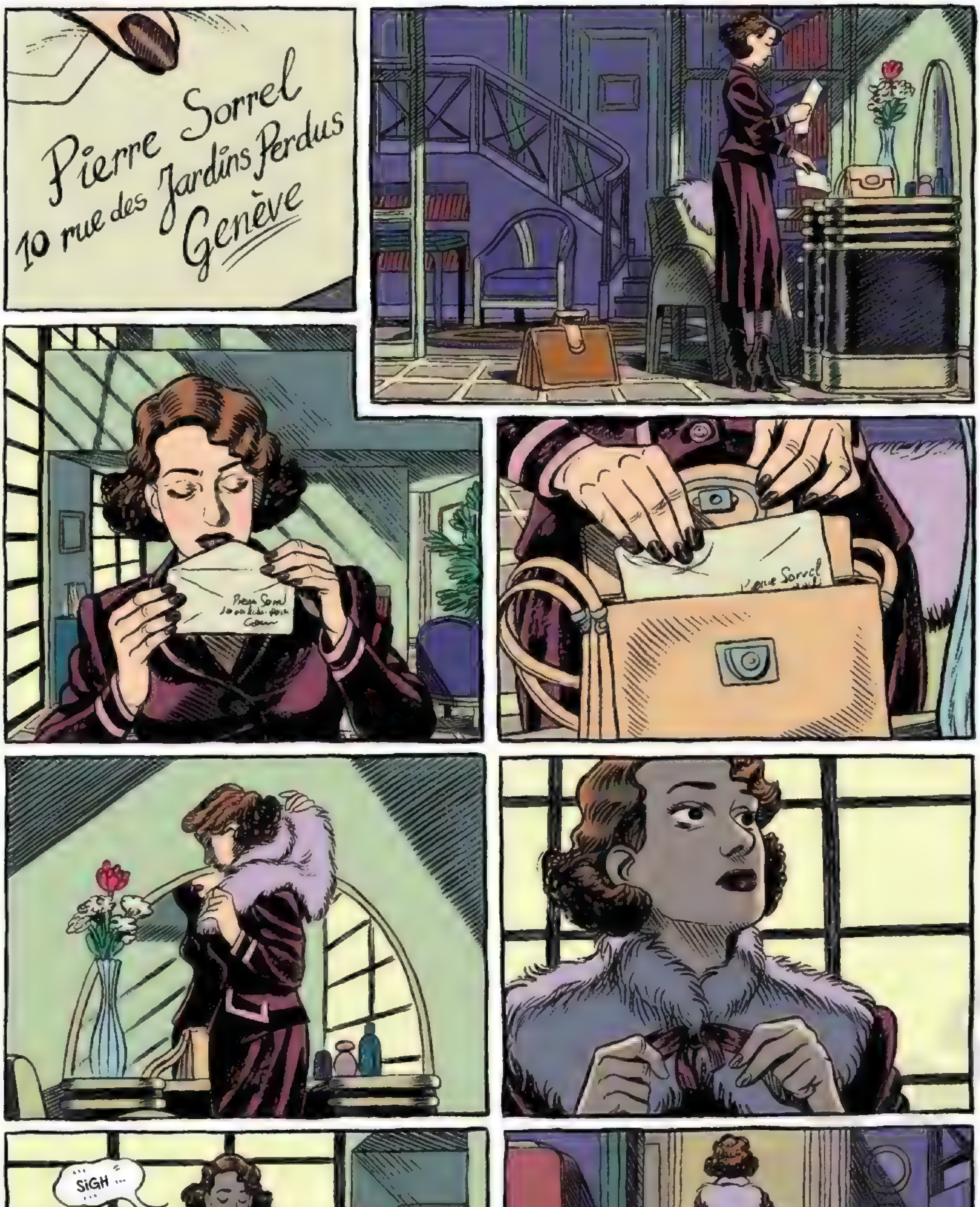
THE SET-UP: With the death of his gran, Jérémie and his brother want to learn more about their family's Polish roots – how the Holocaust affected his ancestors, yes, but more what it means to be both Jewish and Polish today...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? Jérémie's made his decision, and he's on his way...
TELL ME MORE: This semi-autobiographical work is the first graphic novel from this Paris-based author.
Written and drawn by: Jérémie Dres
Publisher: SelfMadeHero
© Jérémie Dres

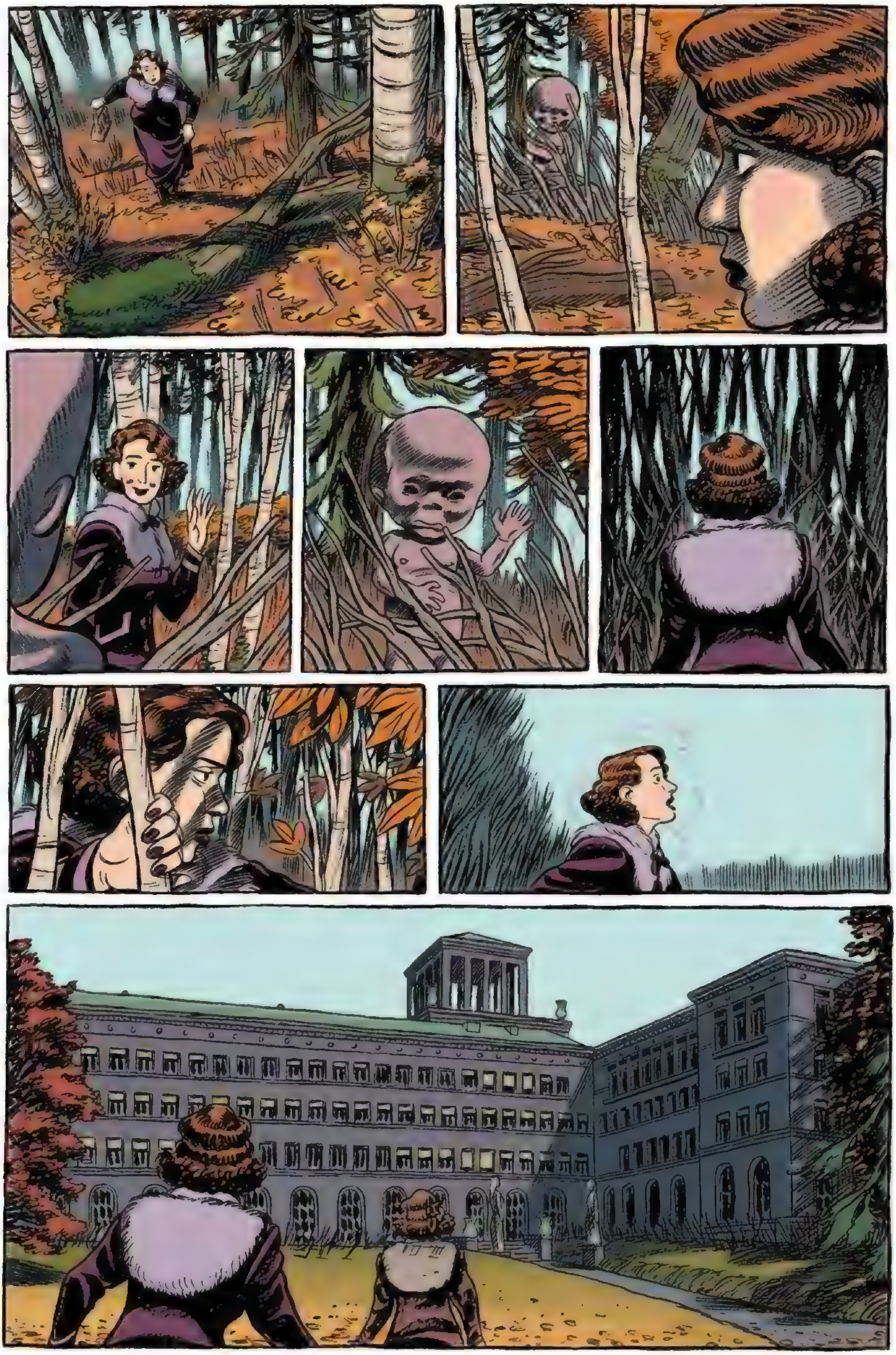

HONK
HONK
BEEP
BEEEEP
WHAT'S THE HOLD-UP?
C'MON, MOVE IT!
BEEEP
HONK
HONK
HONK
BEEEEP

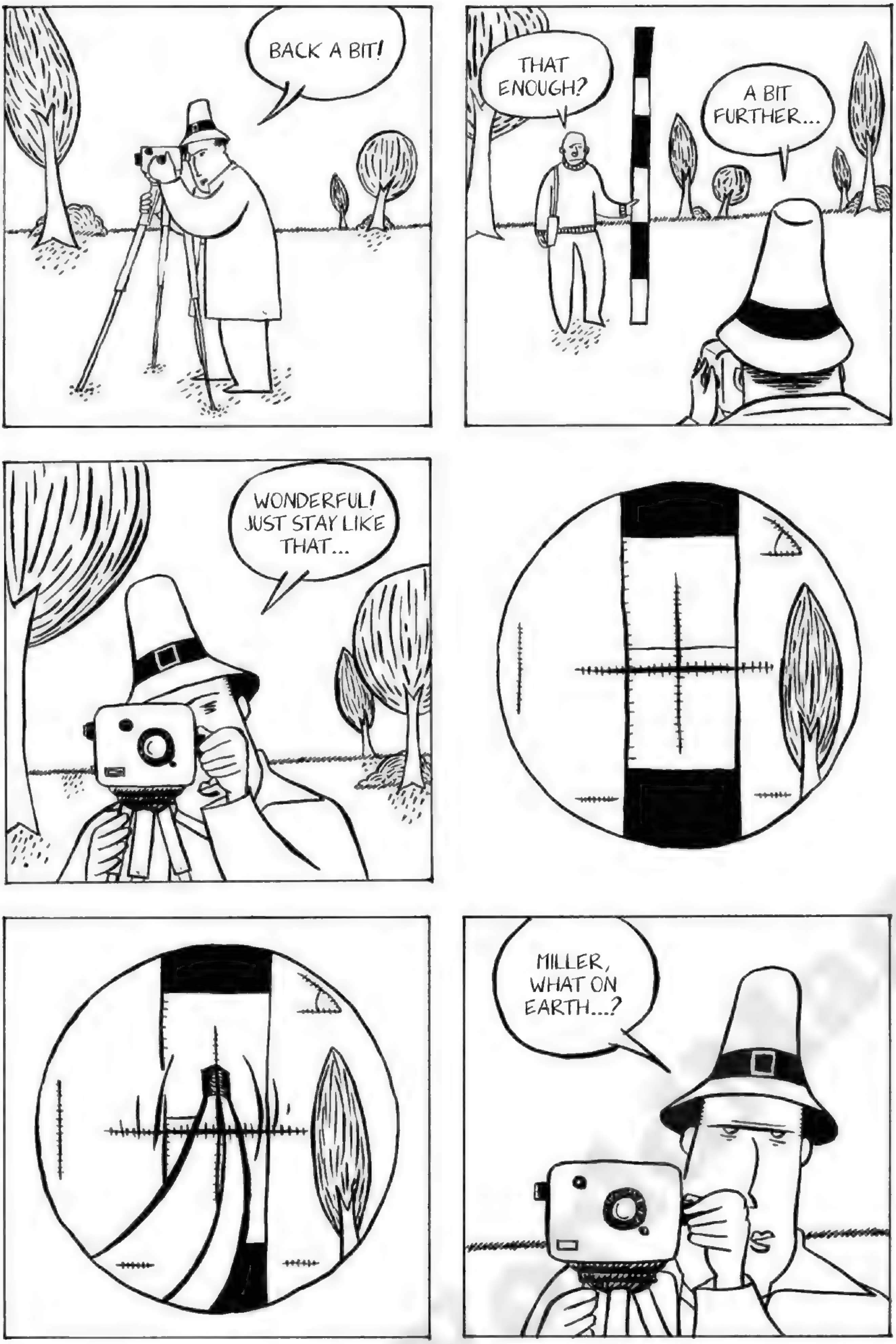

WHAT'S GOING ON?
SEE FOR YOURSELF, MADAME.
PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR VEHICLE.
OFFICER, I SIMPLY MUST GET TO THE HOSPITAL.
I'M SORRY, MADAME.
MY HUSBAND WAS IN A SERIOUS ACCIDENT. THEY'RE WAITING FOR ME AT THE HOSPITAL. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT STATE HE'S IN...
HM. I... UNDERSTAND
BUT WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?
RETURN TO YOUR VEHICLE.
IF EVERYONE STARTS –
PSSSSH!
IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, THE HOSPITAL'S JUST OVER THERE, ISN'T IT? IF I GO THROUGH THE WOODS TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE HILL...
WHY – CERTAINLY – YES...
YOU'LL BE A GOOD TWENTY MINUTES ON FOOT.

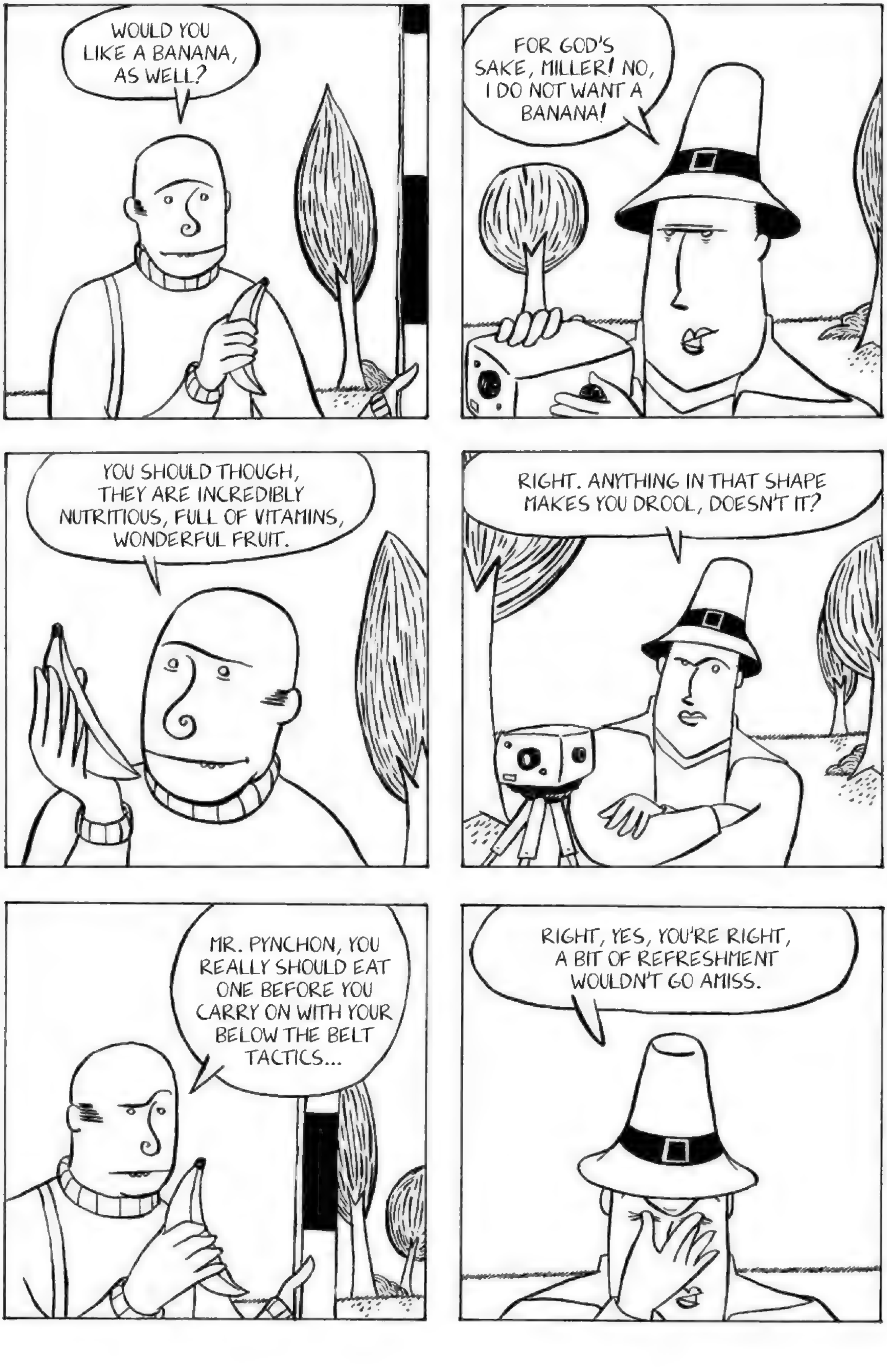

NO –
WAIT!
YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE YOUR CAR ON THE ROAD!
KRAK
OUCH!
OH!
DAMMIT!

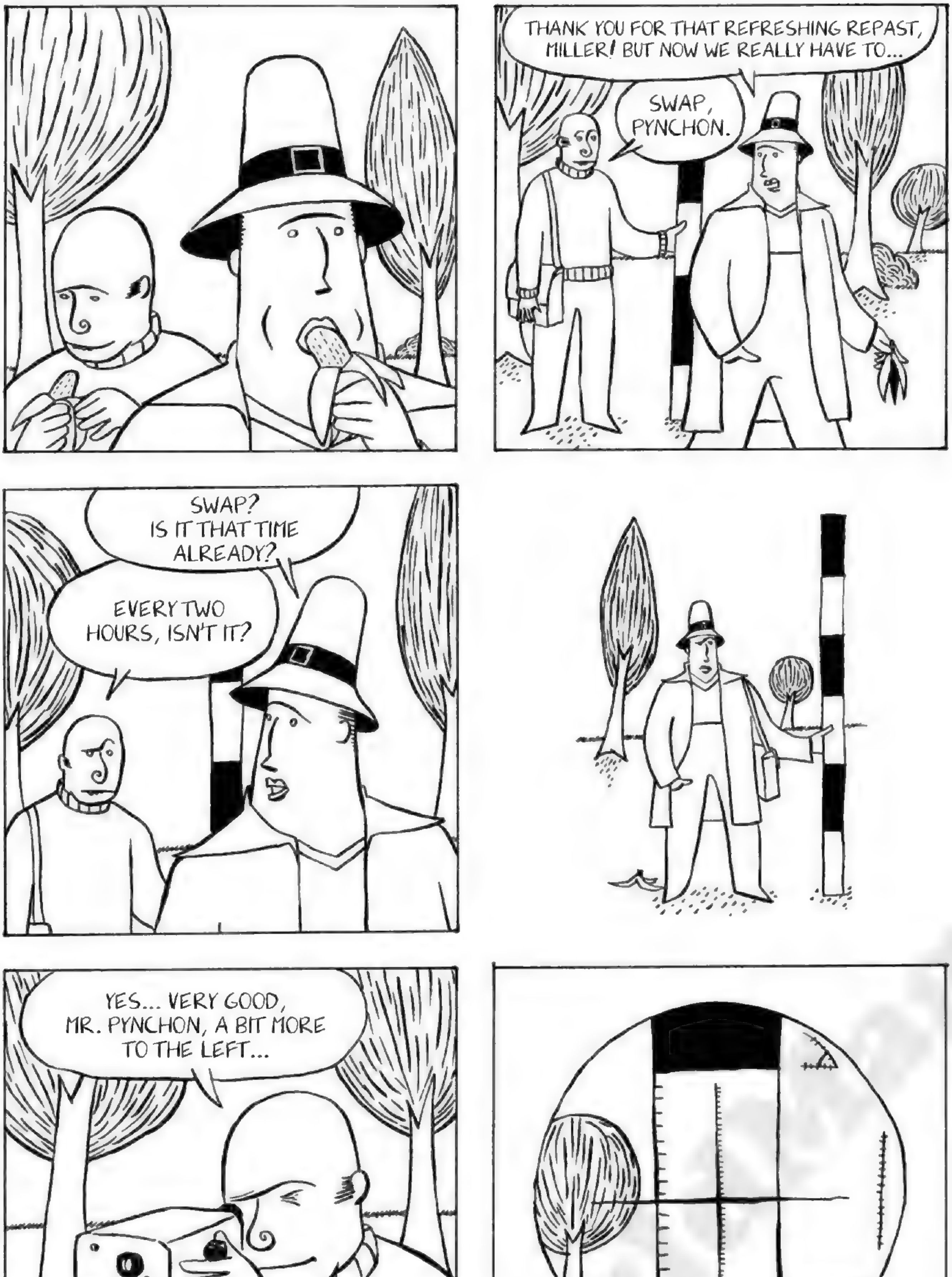

GROiNK
CHOMP GROiiiiNK
SNORFL
GROiNK
GROiNK
CHOMP
iS SOMEONE THERE?
OiNK
SHOW YOURSELF!
i KNOW YOU'RE tHERE!
SNiF
SNF
GROOiiiNK!

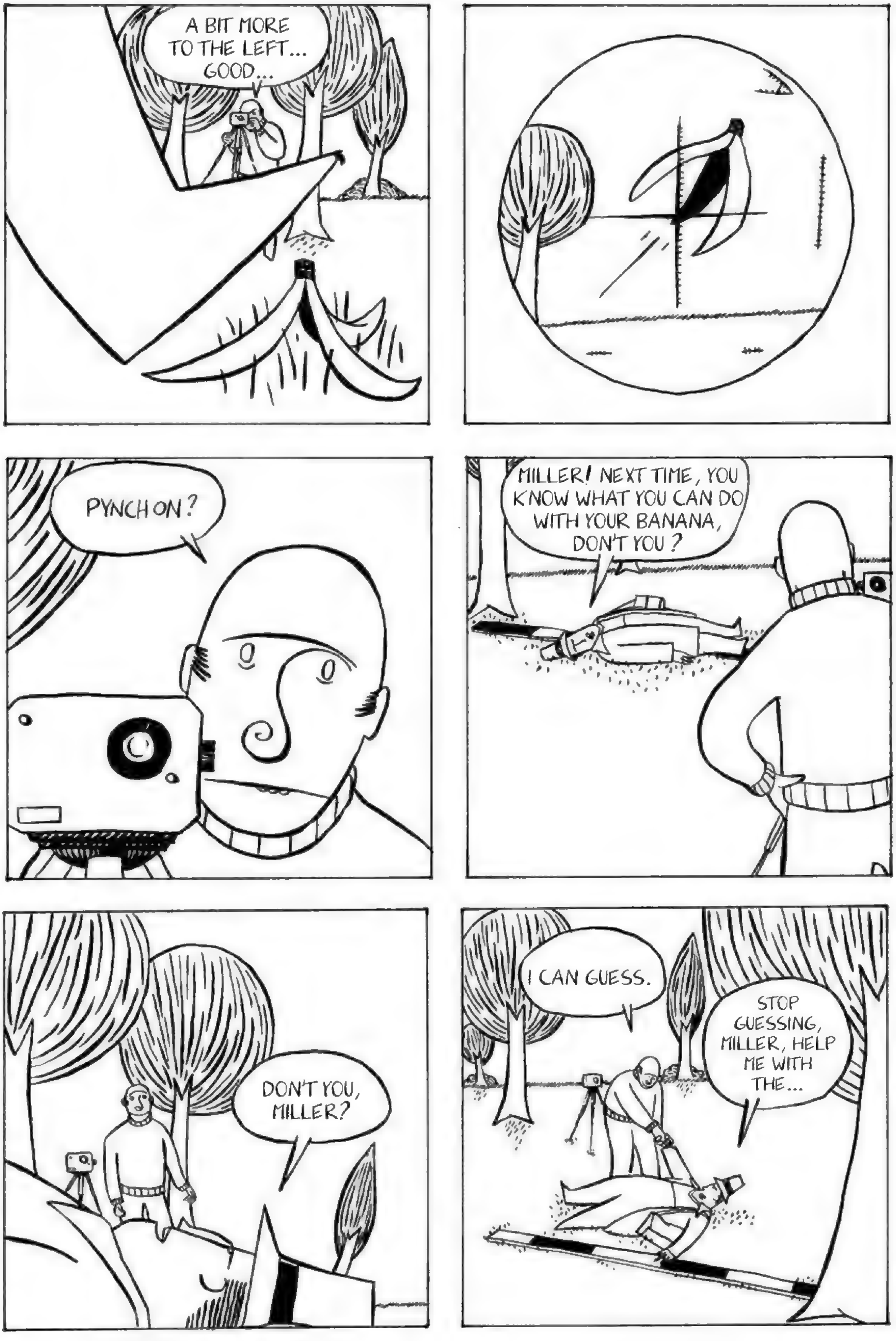

Pierre Sorrel
10 rue des Jardins Perdus
Genève
Pierre Sorrel
...SiGH...

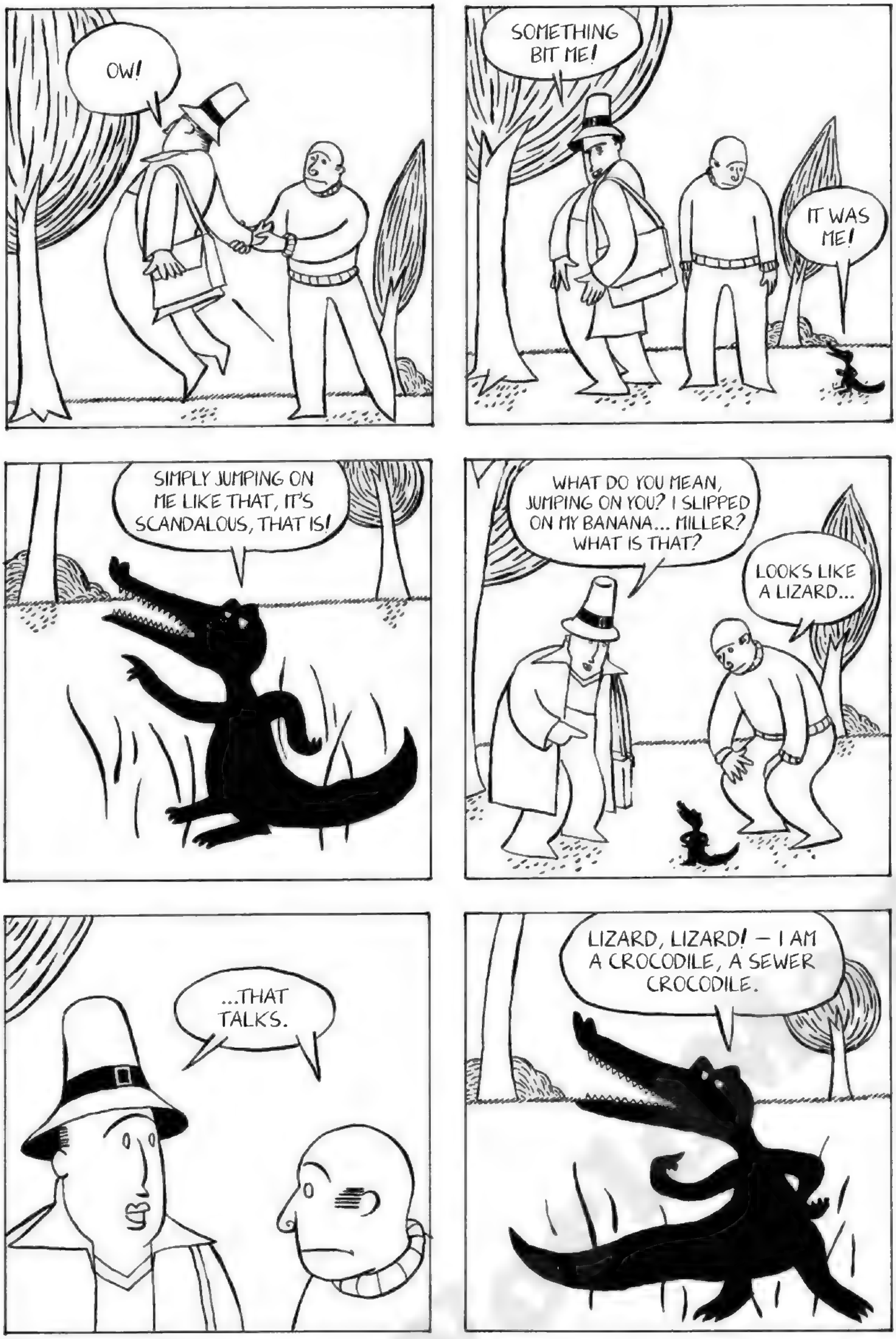


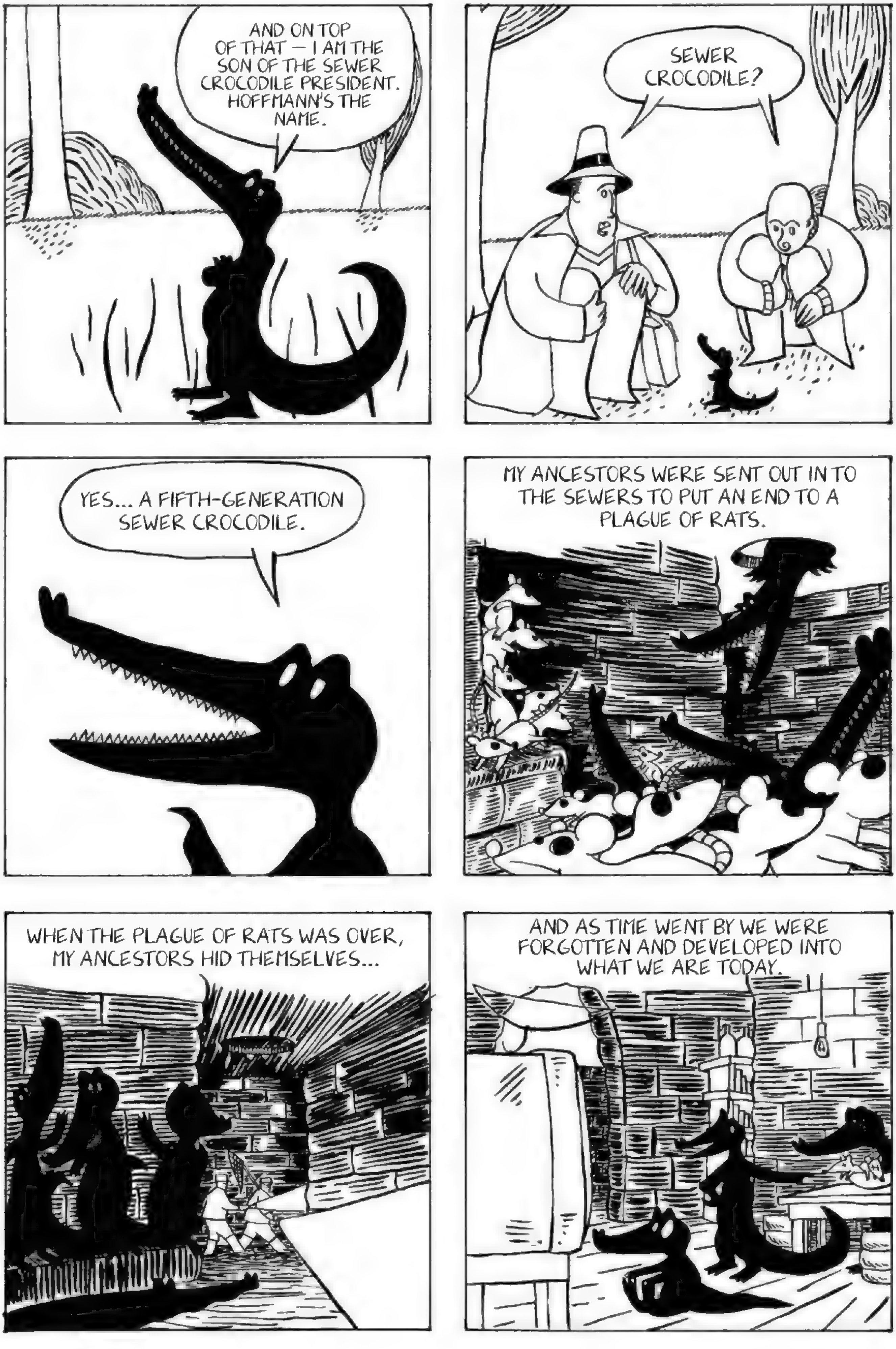

BACK A BIT!
THAT ENOUGH?
A BIT FURTHER...
WONDERFUL! JUST STAY LIKE THAT...
MILLER, WHAT ON EARTH...?

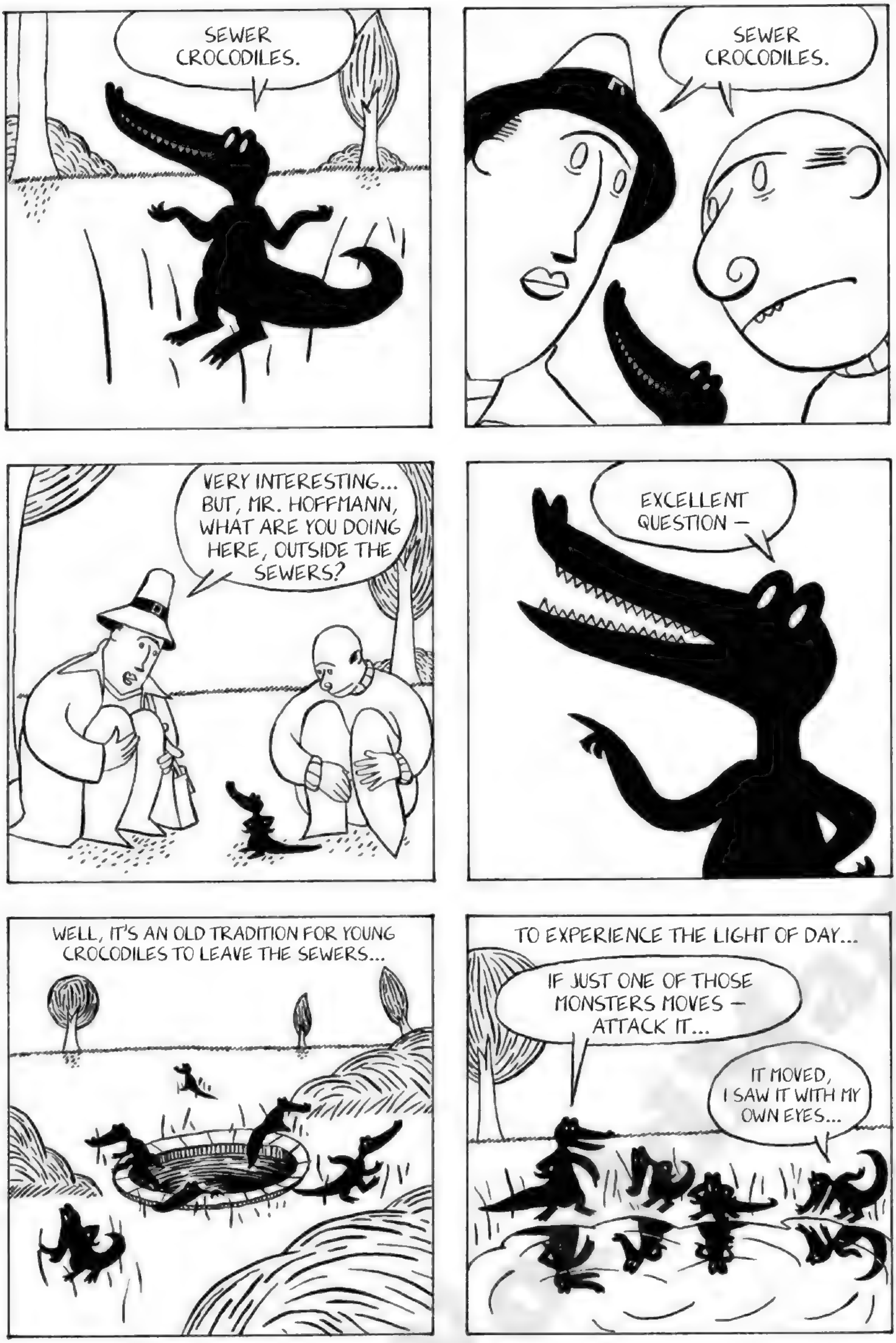

WOULD YOU LIKE A BANANA, AS WELL?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, MILLER! NO, I DO NOT WANT A BANANA!
YOU SHOULD THOUGH, THEY ARE INCREDIBLY NUTRITIOUS, FULL OF VITAMINS, WONDERFUL FRUIT.
RIGHT. ANYTHING IN THAT SHAPE MAKES YOU DROOL, DOESN'T IT?
MR. PYNCHON, YOU REALLY SHOULD EAT ONE BEFORE YOU CARRY ON WITH YOUR BELOW THE BELT TACTICS...
RIGHT, YES, YOU'RE RIGHT, A BIT OF REFRESHMENT WOULDN'T GO AMISS.

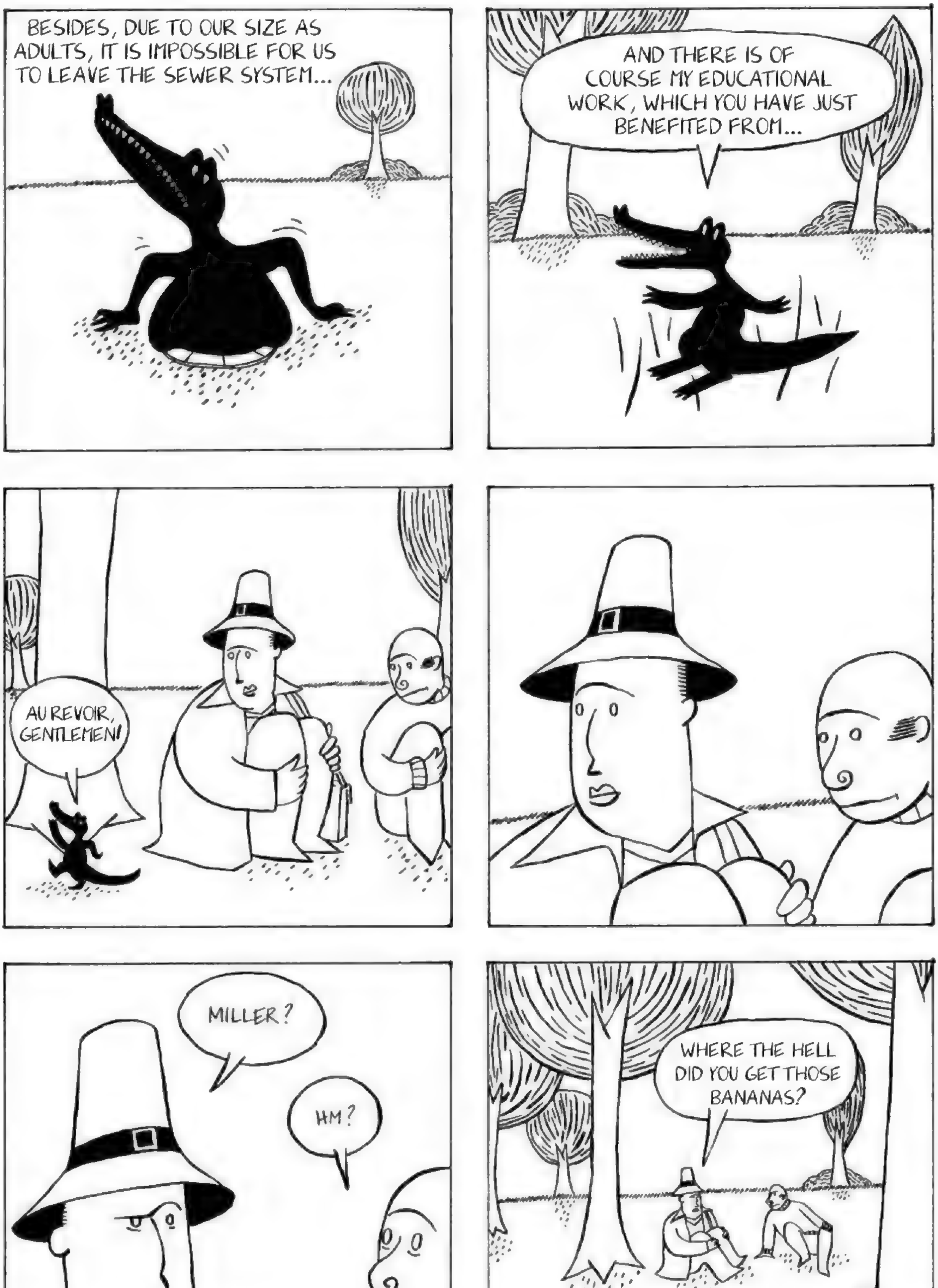

THANK YOU FOR THAT REFRESHING REPAST, MILLER! BUT NOW WE REALLY HAVE TO...
SWAP, PYNCHON.
SWAP? IS IT THAT TIME ALREADY?
EVERY TWO HOURS, ISN'T IT?
YES... VERY GOOD, MR. PYNCHON, A BIT MORE TO THE LEFT...

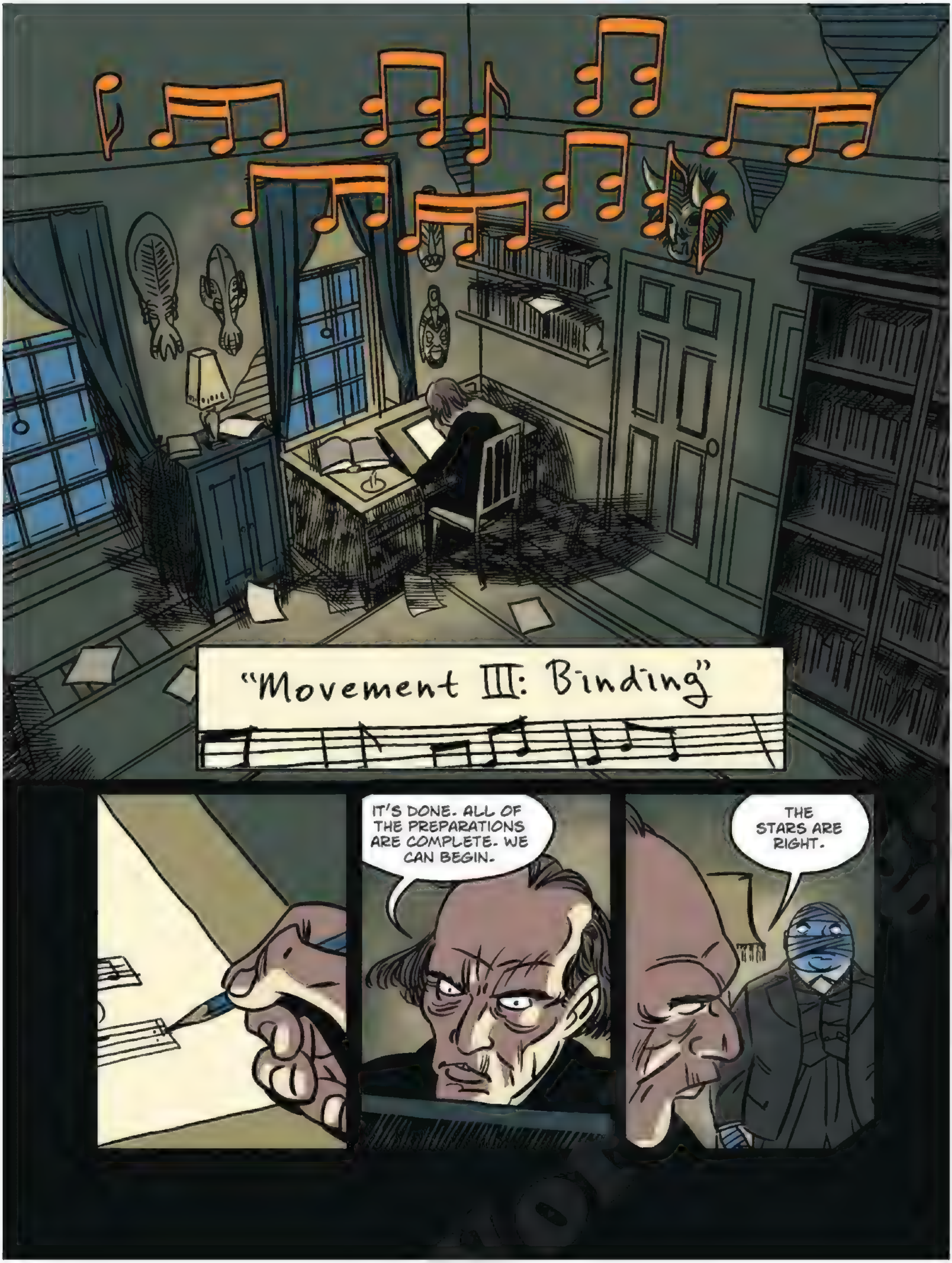

A BIT MORE TO THE LEFT... GOOD...
PYNCHON?
MILLER! NEXT TIME, YOU KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR BANANA, DON'T YOU?
DON'T YOU, MILLER?
I CAN GUESS.
STOP GUESSING, MILLER, HELP ME WITH THE...

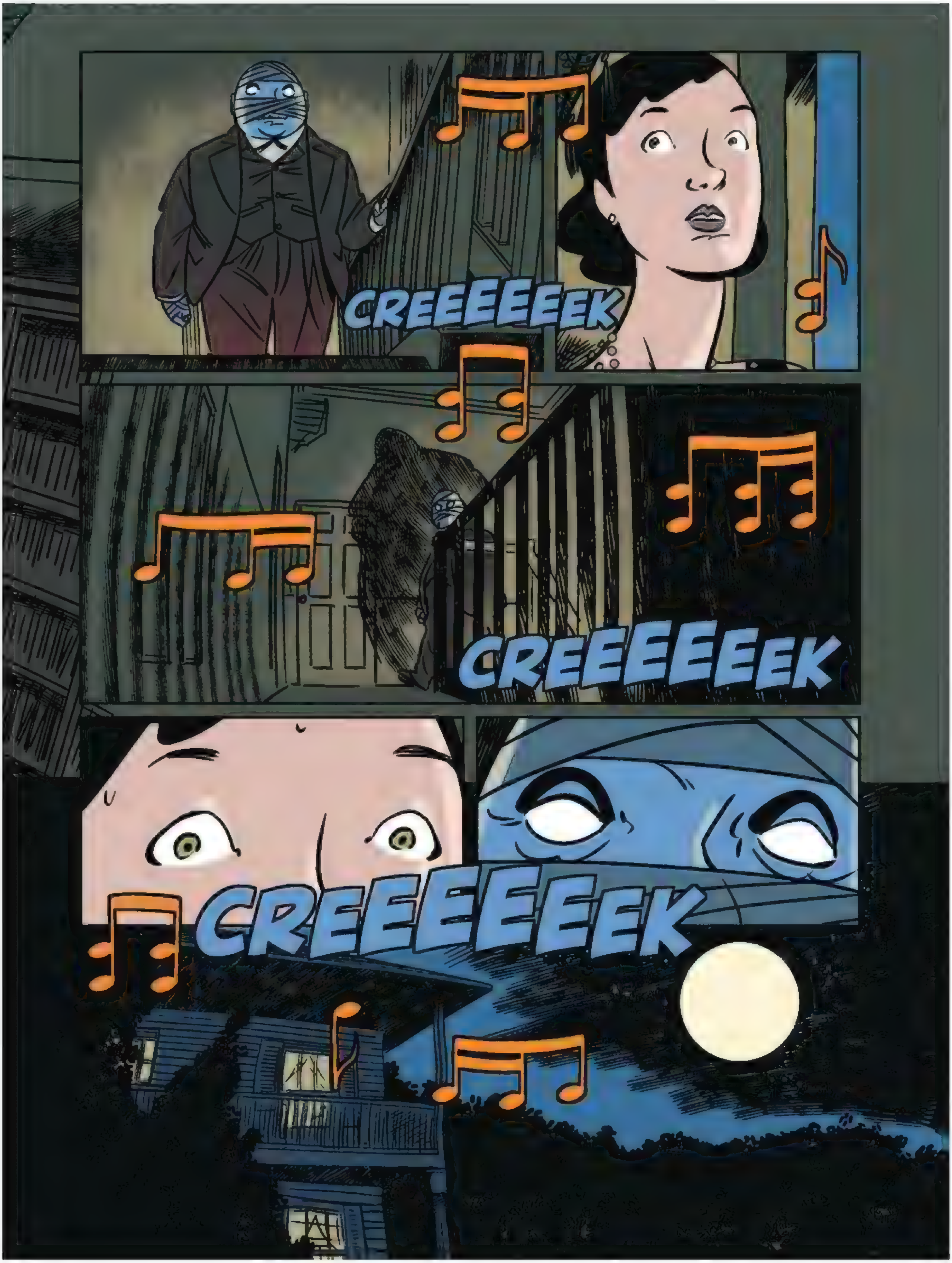

OW!
SOMETHING BIT ME!
IT WAS ME!
SIMPLY JUMPING ON ME LIKE THAT, IT'S SCANDALOUS, THAT IS!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, JUMPING ON YOU? I SLIPPED ON MY BANANA... MILLER? WHAT IS THAT?
LOOKS LIKE A LIZARD...
...THAT TALKS.
LIZARD, LIZARD! — I AM A CROCODILE, A SEWER CROCODILE.

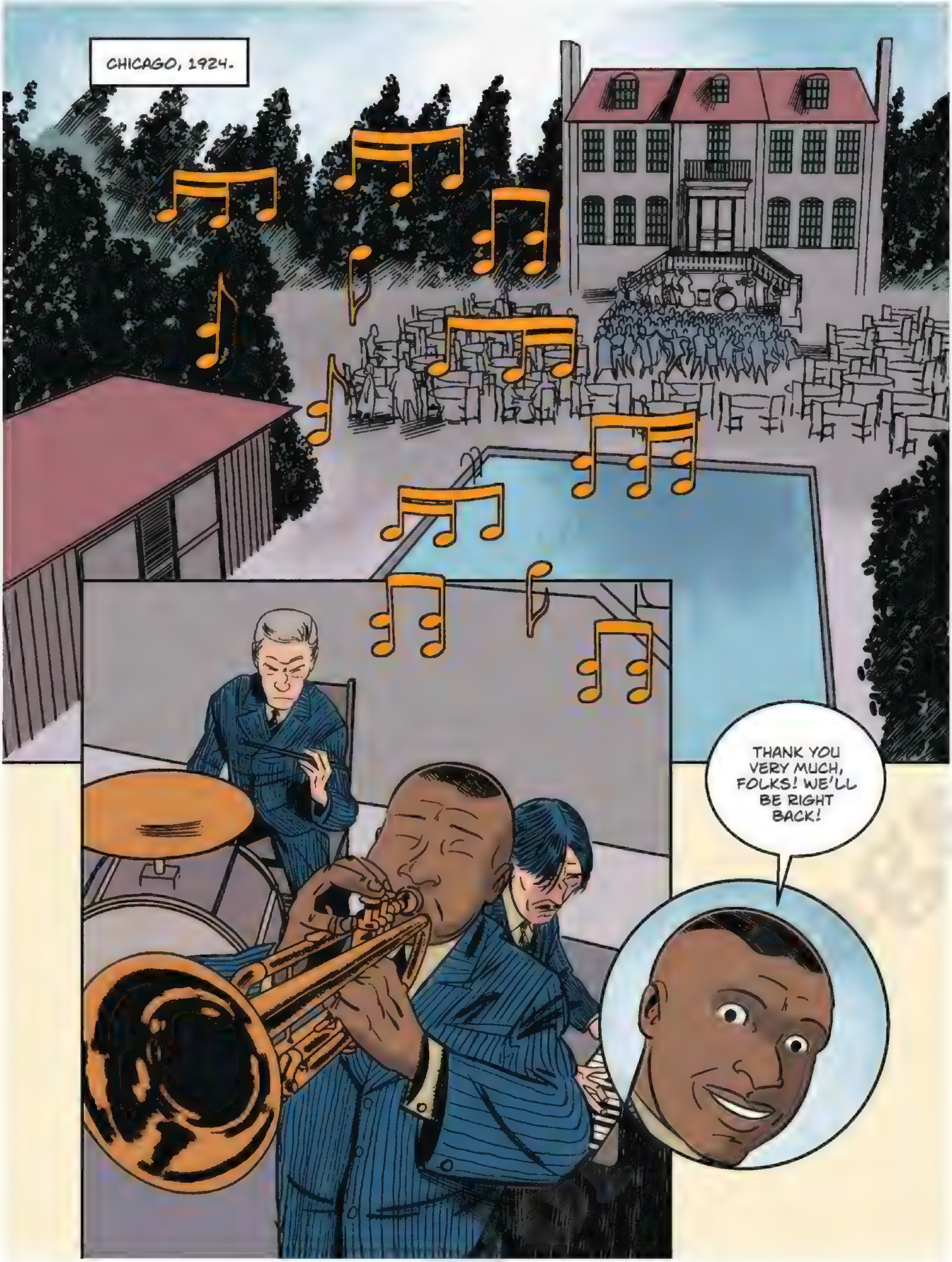

AND ON TOP OF THAT — I AM THE SON OF THE SEWER CROCODILE PRESIDENT. HOFFMANN'S THE NAME.
SEWER CROCODILE?
YES... A FIFTH-GENERATION SEWER CROCODILE.
MY ANCESTORS WERE SENT OUT IN TO THE SEWERS TO PUT AN END TO A PLAGUE OF RATS.
WHEN THE PLAGUE OF RATS WAS OVER, MY ANCESTORS HID THEMSELVES...
AND AS TIME WENT BY WE WERE FORGOTTEN AND DEVELOPED INTO WHAT WE ARE TODAY.

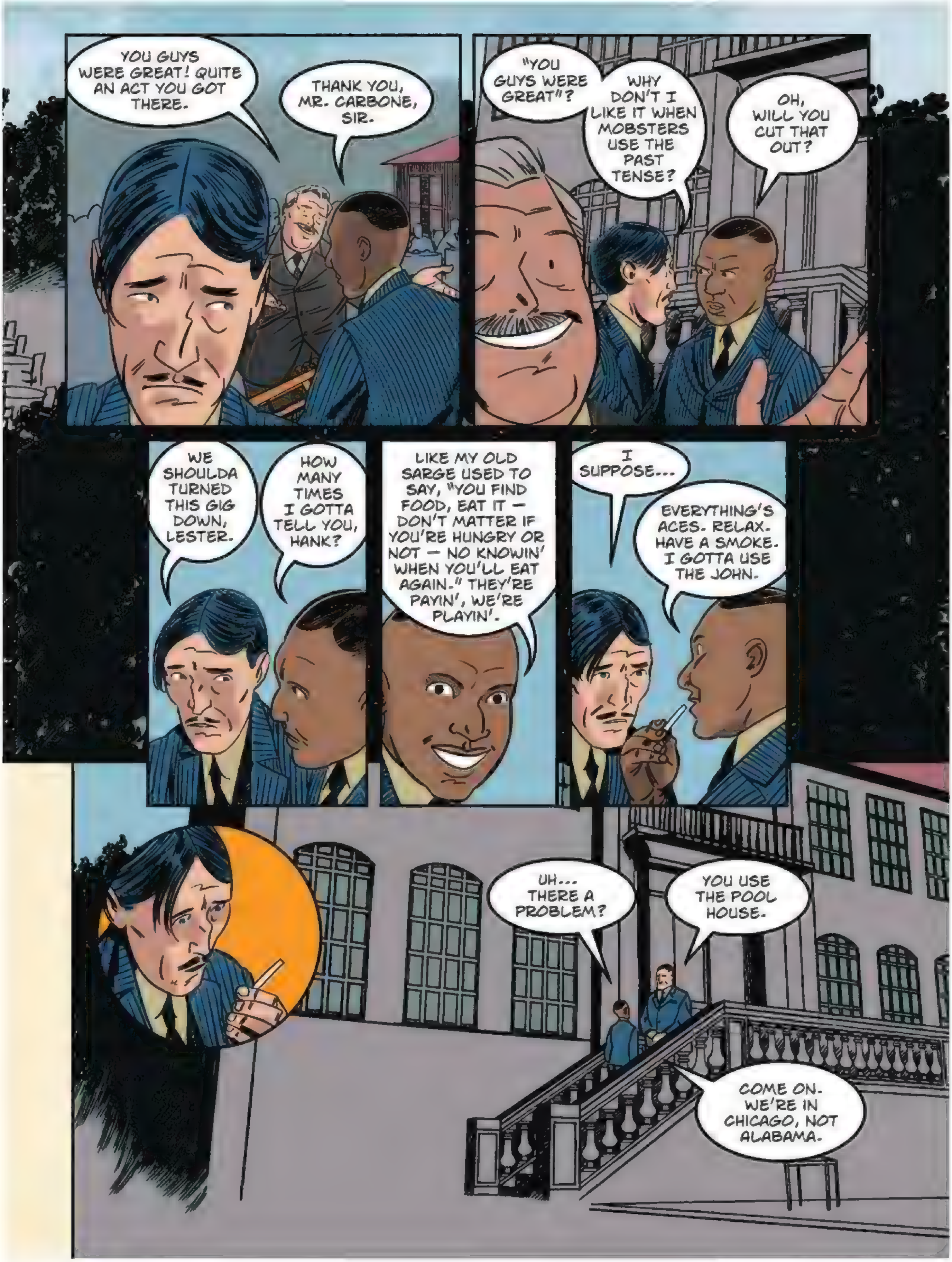

SEWER CROCODILES.
SEWER CROCODILES.
VERY INTERESTING... BUT, MR. HOFFMANN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, OUTSIDE THE SEWERS?
EXCELLENT QUESTION –
WELL, IT'S AN OLD TRADITION FOR YOUNG CROCODILES TO LEAVE THE SEWERS...
TO EXPERIENCE THE LIGHT OF DAY...
IF JUST ONE OF THOSE MONSTERS MOVES – ATTACK IT...
IT MOVED, I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES...

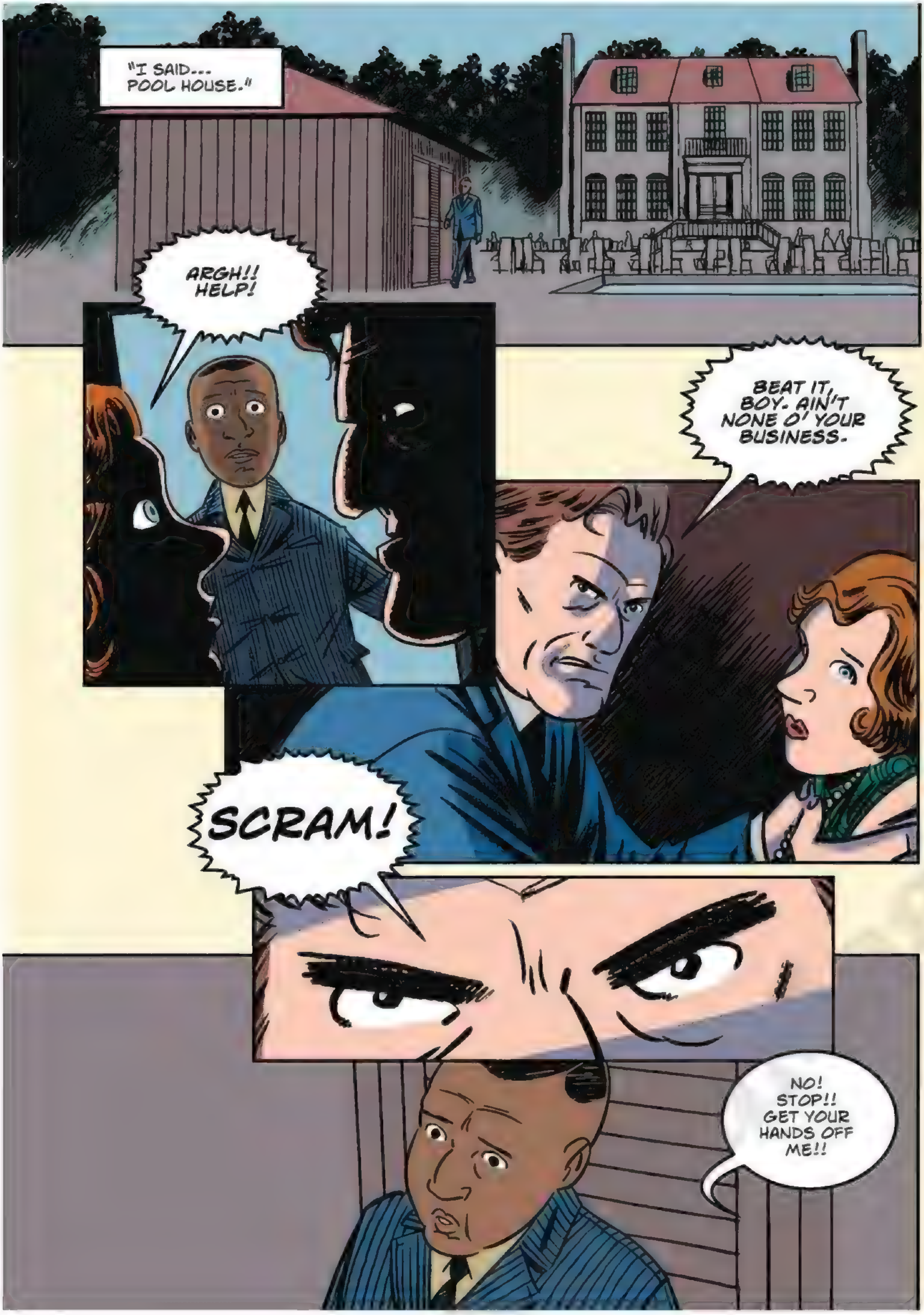

BESIDES, DUE TO OUR SIZE AS ADULTS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO LEAVE THE SEWER SYSTEM...
AND THERE IS OF COURSE MY EDUCATIONAL WORK, WHICH YOU HAVE JUST BENEFITED FROM...
AU REVOIR, GENTLEMEN!
MILLER?
HM?
WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GET THOSE BANANAS?

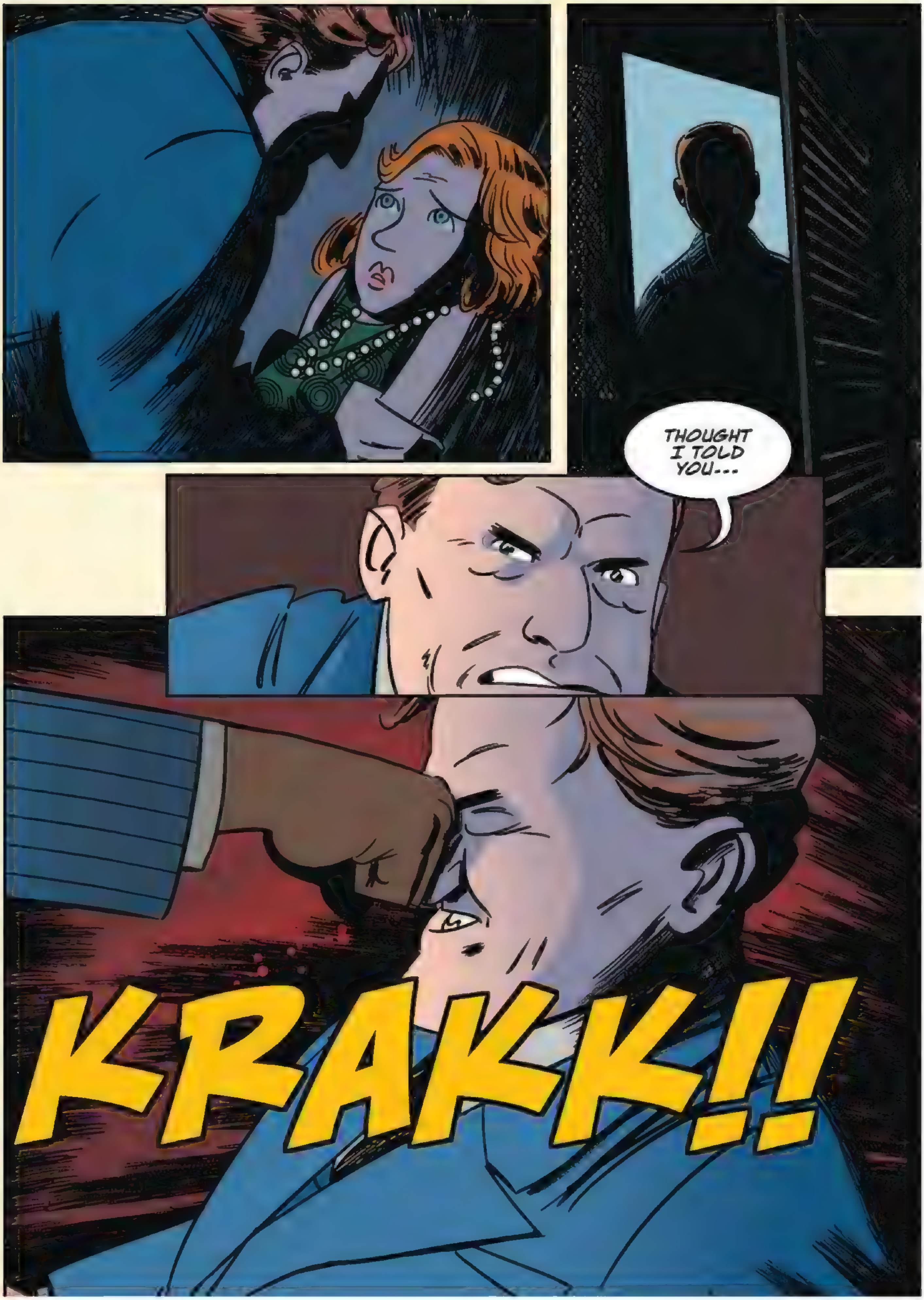

"Movement III: Binding"
IT'S DONE. ALL OF THE PREPARATIONS ARE COMPLETE. WE CAN BEGIN.
THE STARS ARE RIGHT.

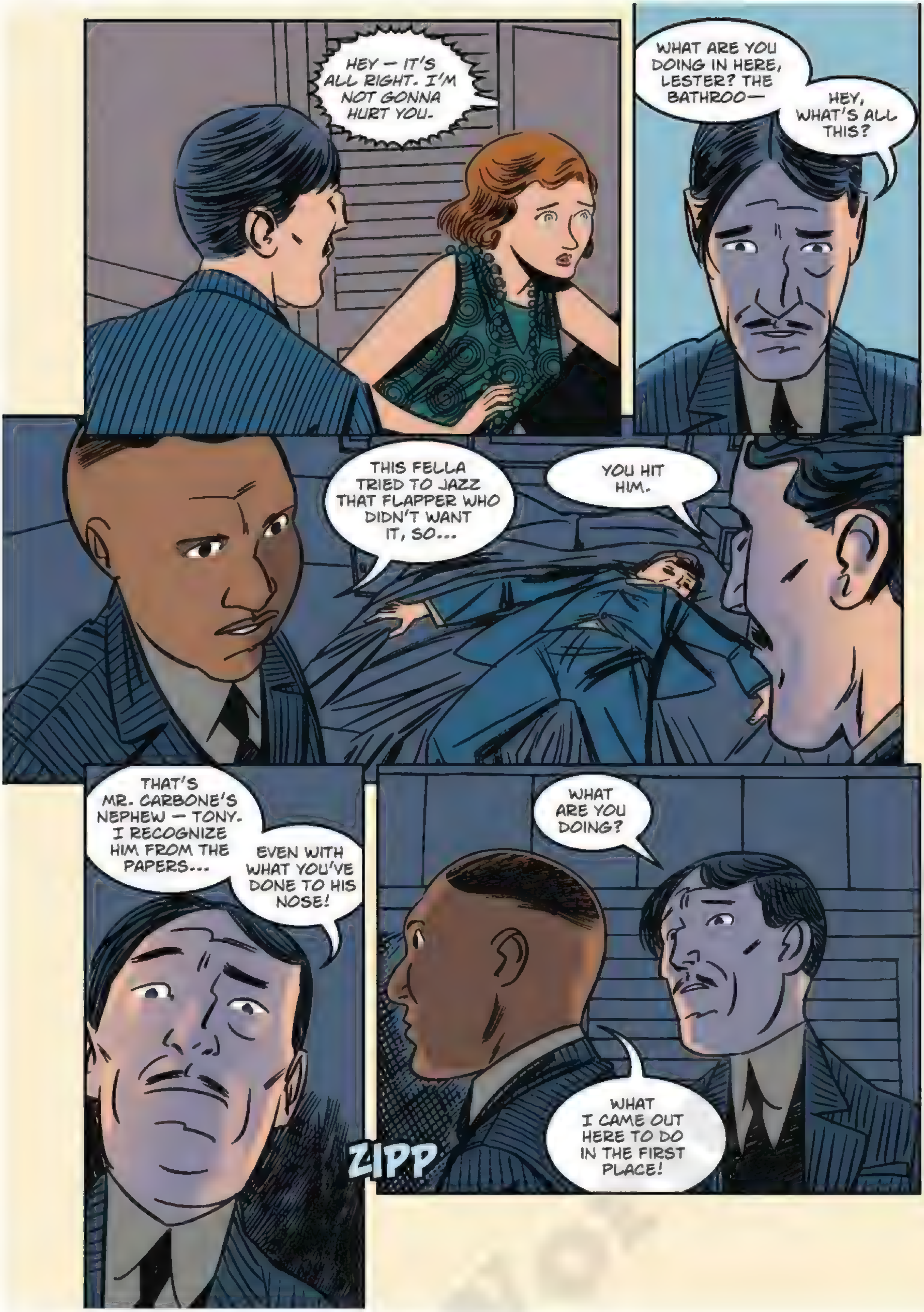

CREEEEEEEK
CREEEEEEEK
CREEEEEEEK

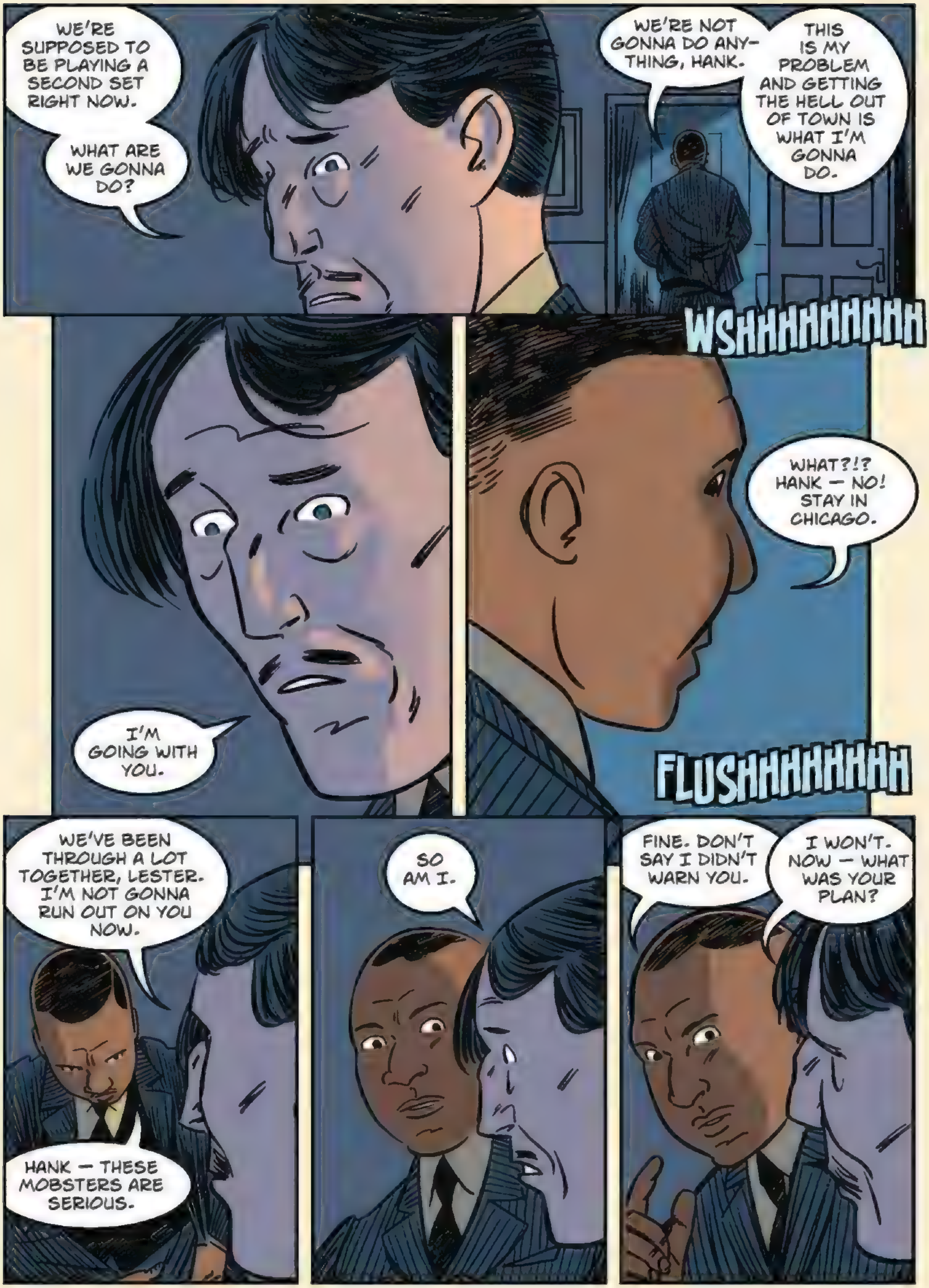

CHICAGO, 1924.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, FOLKS! WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK!


YOU GUYS WERE GREAT! QUITE AN ACT YOU GOT THERE.
THANK YOU, MR. CARBONE, SIR.
"YOU GUYS WERE GREAT"?
WHY DON'T I LIKE IT WHEN MOBSTERS USE THE PAST TENSE?
OH, WILL YOU CUT THAT OUT?
WE SHOULDA TURNED THIS GIG DOWN, LESTER.
HOW MANY TIMES I GOTTA TELL YOU, HANK?
LIKE MY OLD SARGE USED TO SAY, "YOU FIND FOOD, EAT IT — DON'T MATTER IF YOU'RE HUNGRY OR NOT — NO KNOWIN' WHEN YOU'LL EAT AGAIN." THEY'RE PAYIN', WE'RE PLAYIN'.
I SUPPOSE...
EVERYTHING'S ACES. RELAX. HAVE A SMOKE. I GOTTA USE THE JOHN.
UH... THERE A PROBLEM?
YOU USE THE POOL HOUSE.
COME ON. WE'RE IN CHICAGO, NOT ALABAMA.


"I SAID... POOL HOUSE."
ARGH!! HELP!
BEAT IT, BOY. AIN'T NONE O' YOUR BUSINESS.
SCRAM!
NO! STOP!! GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!!

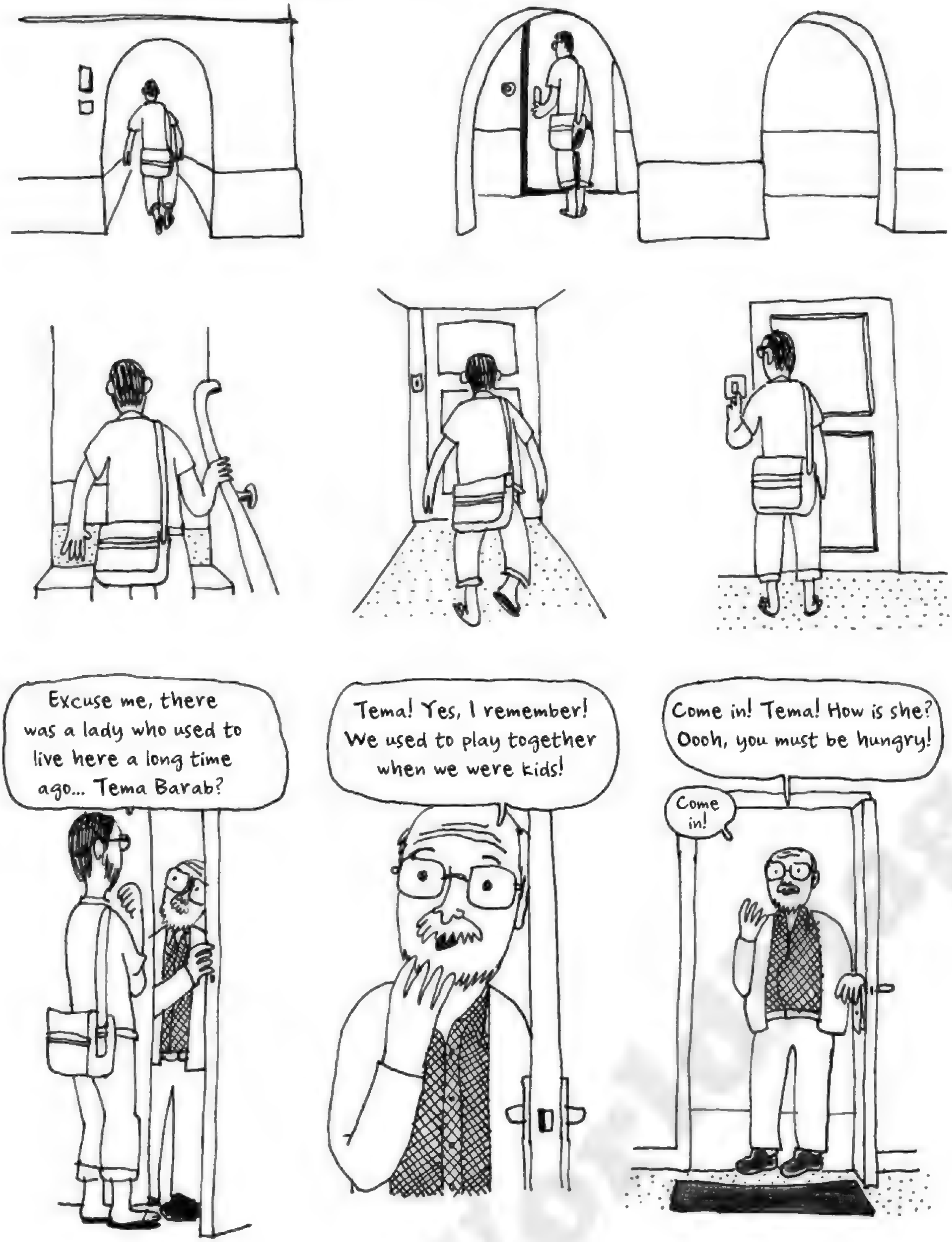

THOUGHT I TOLD YOU---
KRAKK!!

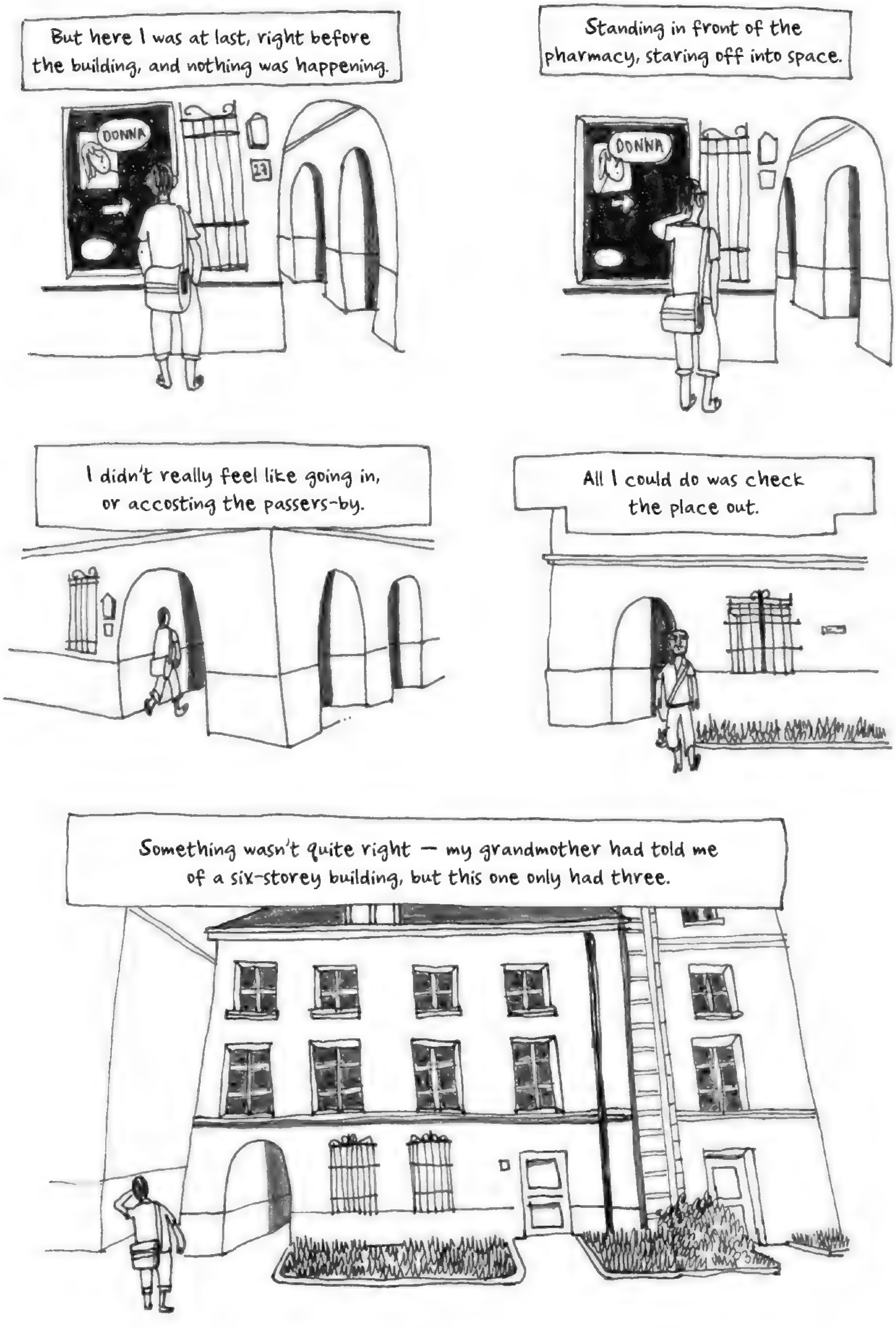

HEY — IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M NOT GONNA HURT YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE, LESTER? THE BATHROO—
HEY, WHAT'S ALL THIS?
THIS FELLA TRIED TO JAZZ THAT FLAPPER WHO DIDN'T WANT IT, SO...
YOU HIT HIM.
THAT'S MR. CARBONE'S NEPHEW — TONY. I RECOGNIZE HIM FROM THE PAPERS...
EVEN WITH WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO HIS NOSE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHAT I CAME OUT HERE TO DO IN THE FIRST PLACE!
ZIPP

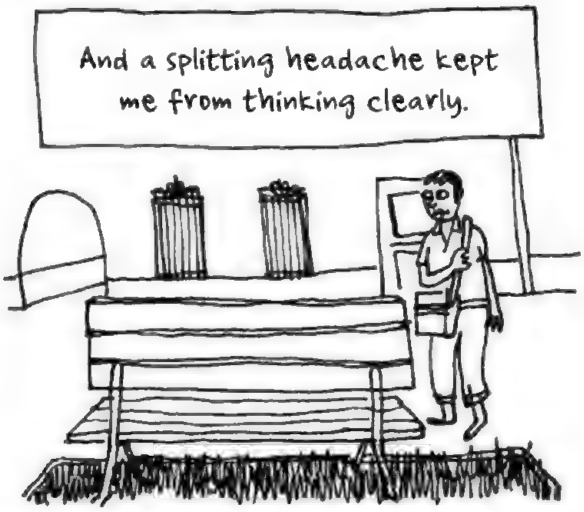

WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PLAYING A SECOND SET RIGHT NOW.
WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?
WE'RE NOT GONNA DO ANYTHING, HANK.
THIS IS MY PROBLEM AND GETTING THE HELL OUT OF TOWN IS WHAT I'M GONNA DO.
WSHHHHHHHHH
WHAT?!? HANK — NO! STAY IN CHICAGO.
I'M GOING WITH YOU.
FLUSHHHHHHHH
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER, LESTER. I'M NOT GONNA RUN OUT ON YOU NOW.
HANK — THESE MOBSTERS ARE SERIOUS.
SO AM I.
FINE. DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU.
I WON'T. NOW — WHAT WAS YOUR PLAN?

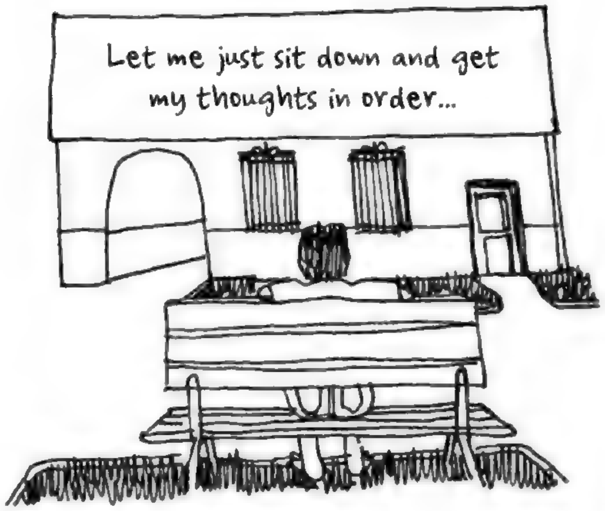
Watch Out for Polacks

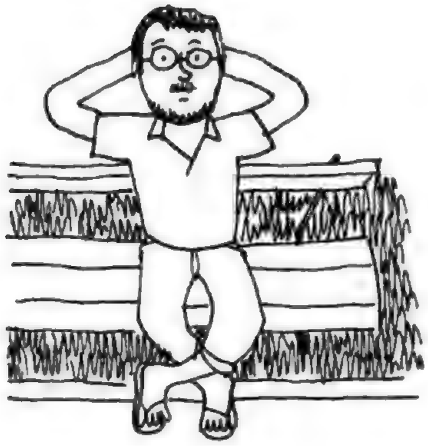
I'd envisioned all sorts of possible scenarios.

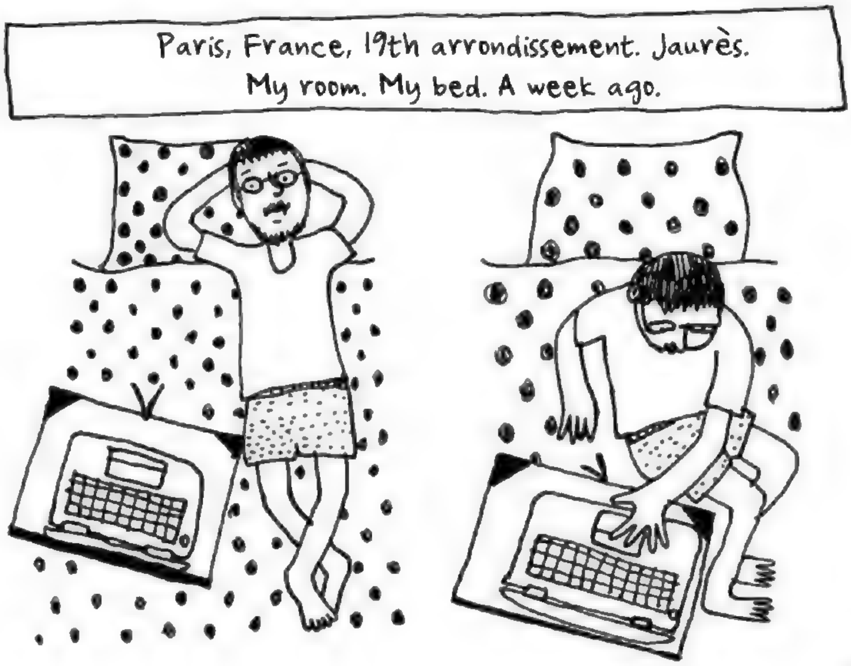

Excuse me, there was a lady who used to live here a long time ago... Tema Barab?
Tema! Yes, I remember! We used to play together when we were kids!
Come in! Tema! How is she? Oooh, you must be hungry!
Come in!

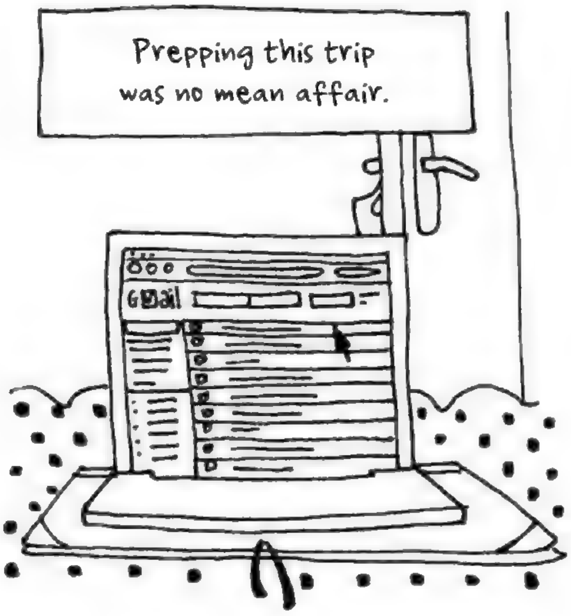

But here I was at last, right before the building, and nothing was happening.
DONNA
23
Standing in front of the pharmacy, staring off into space.
DONNA
I didn't really feel like going in, or accosting the passers-by.
All I could do was check the place out.
Something wasn't quite right — my grandmother had told me of a six-storey building, but this one only had three.

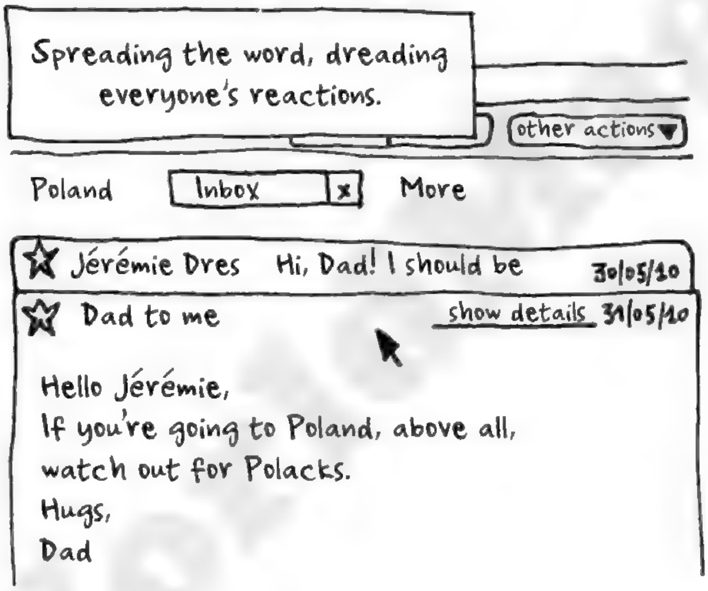

And a splitting headache kept me from thinking clearly.


Let me just sit down and get my thoughts in order...




Paris, France, 19th arrondissement. Jaurès. My room. My bed. A week ago.

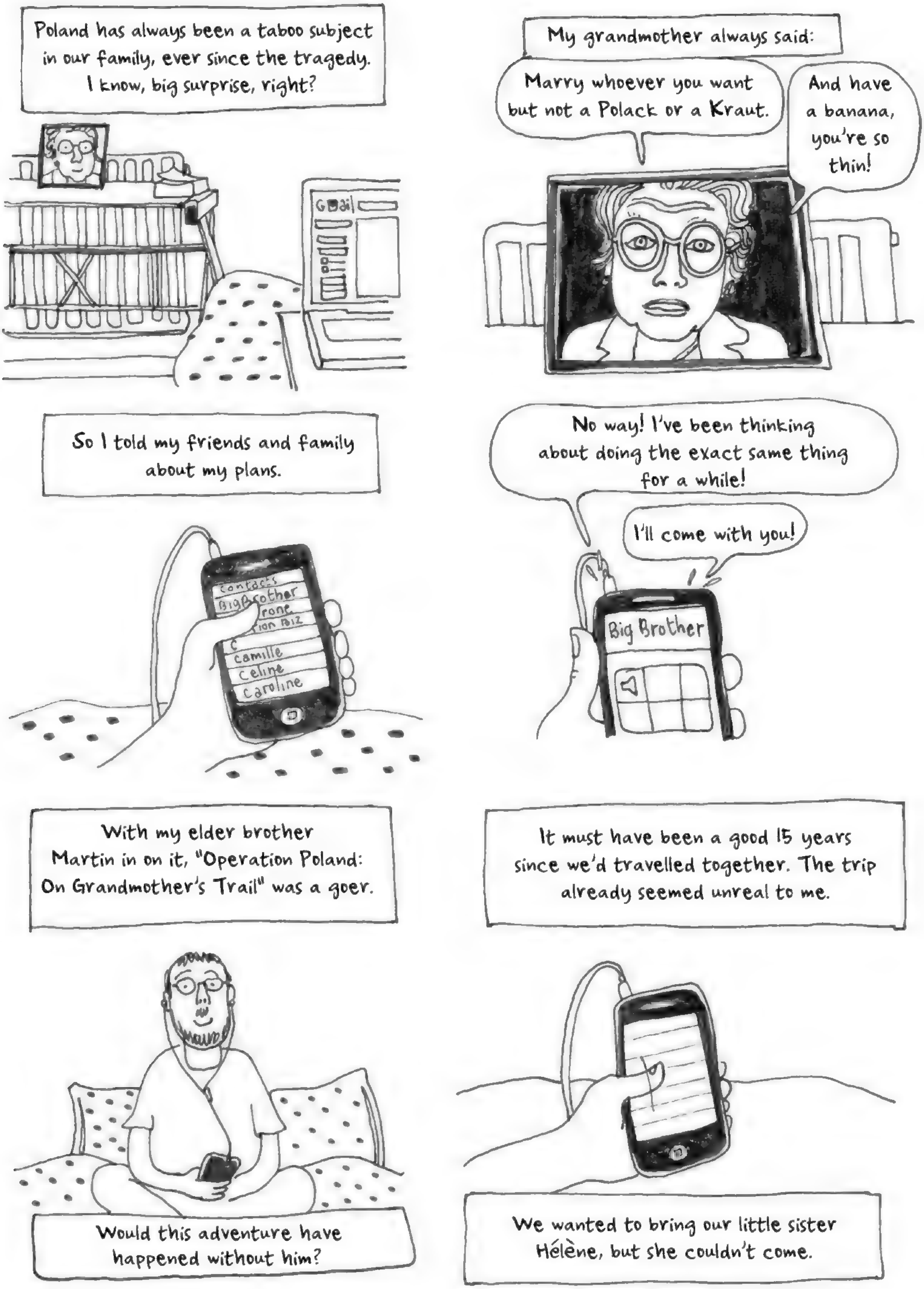

Prepping this trip was no mean affair.
GMail


Spreading the word, dreading everyone's reactions.
other actions ▾
Poland
Inbox
x
More
show details

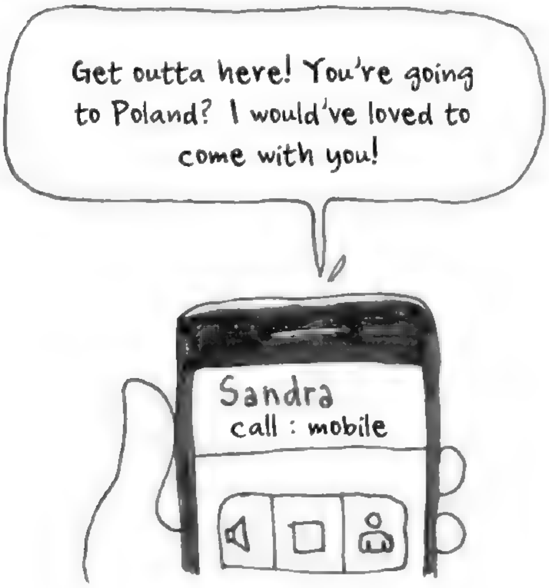
Jérémie Dres Hi, Dad! I should be 30/05/10

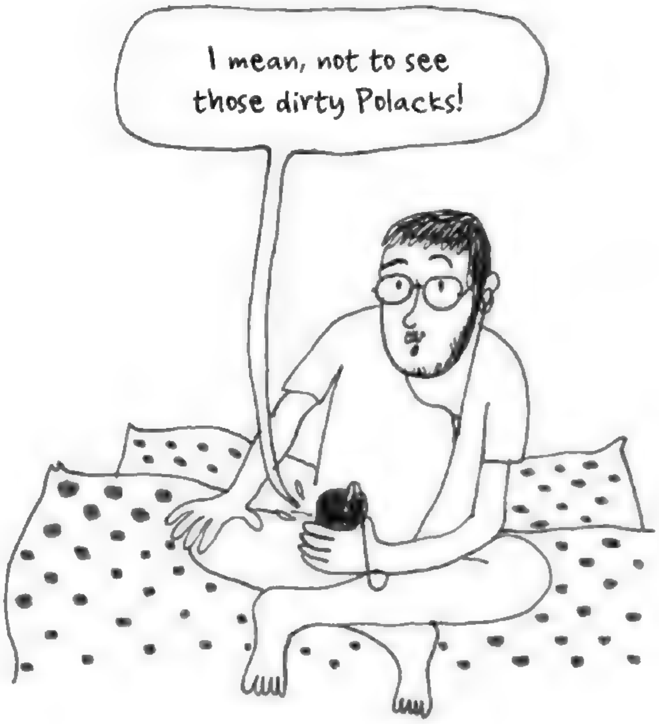
Dad to me 31/05/10

Hello Jérémie,
If you're going to Poland, above all,
watch out for Polacks.
Hugs,
Dad

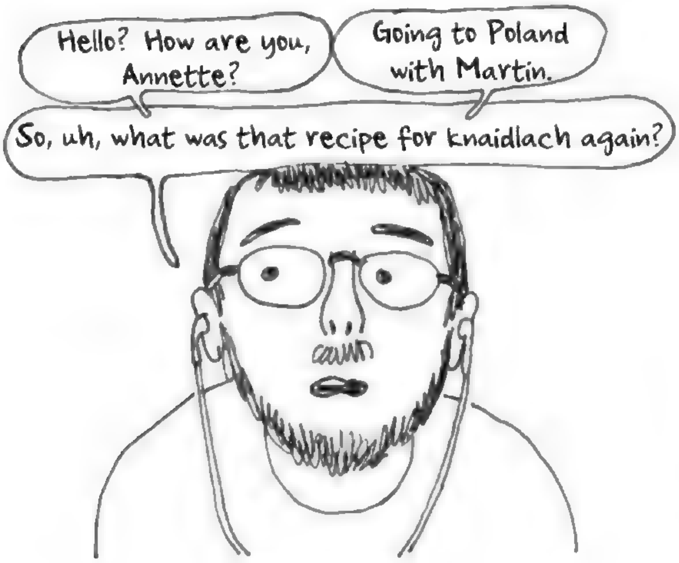

Poland has always been a taboo subject in our family, ever since the tragedy. I know, big surprise, right?
My grandmother always said:
Marry whoever you want but not a Polack or a Kraut.
And have a banana, you're so thin!
So I told my friends and family about my plans.
Contacts
Big Brother
C
Camille
Celine
Caroline
No way! I've been thinking about doing the exact same thing for a while!
I'll come with you!
Big Brother
With my elder brother Martin in on it, "Operation Poland: On Grandmother's Trail" was a goer.
It must have been a good 15 years since we'd travelled together. The trip already seemed unreal to me.
Would this adventure have happened without him?
We wanted to bring our little sister Hélène, but she couldn't come.

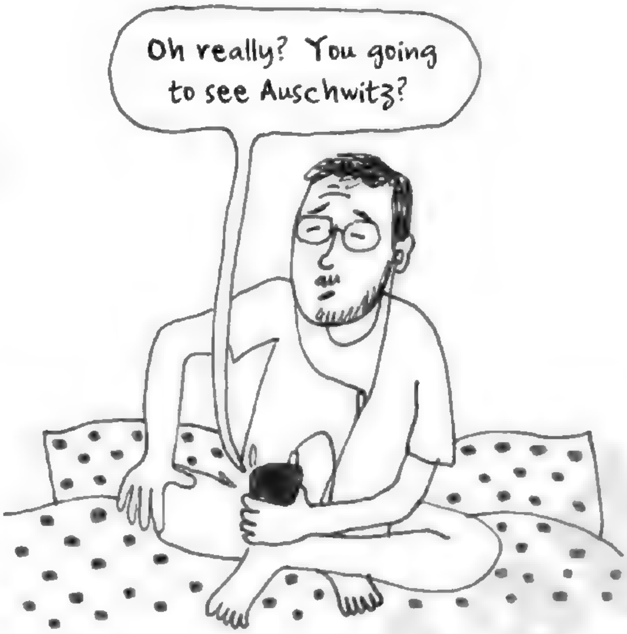
Next on the list: my cousin.


Get outta here! You're going to Poland? I would've loved to come with you!
Sandra
call : mobile

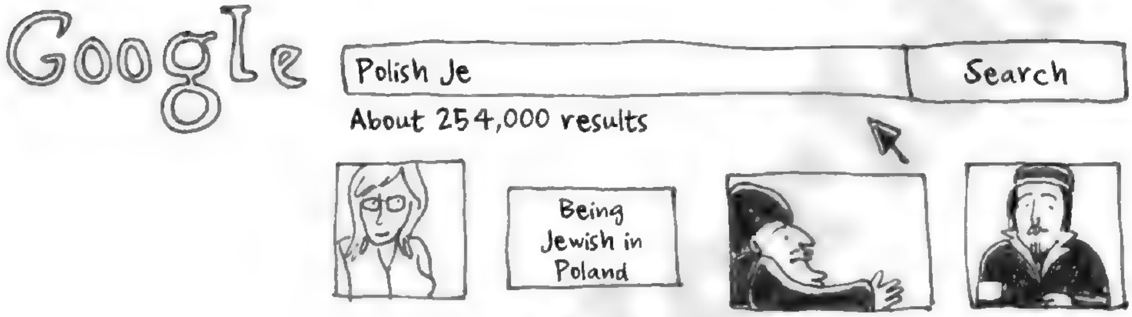

I mean, not to see those dirty Polacks!

And last of all my aunt, whom I hardly dared speak to.

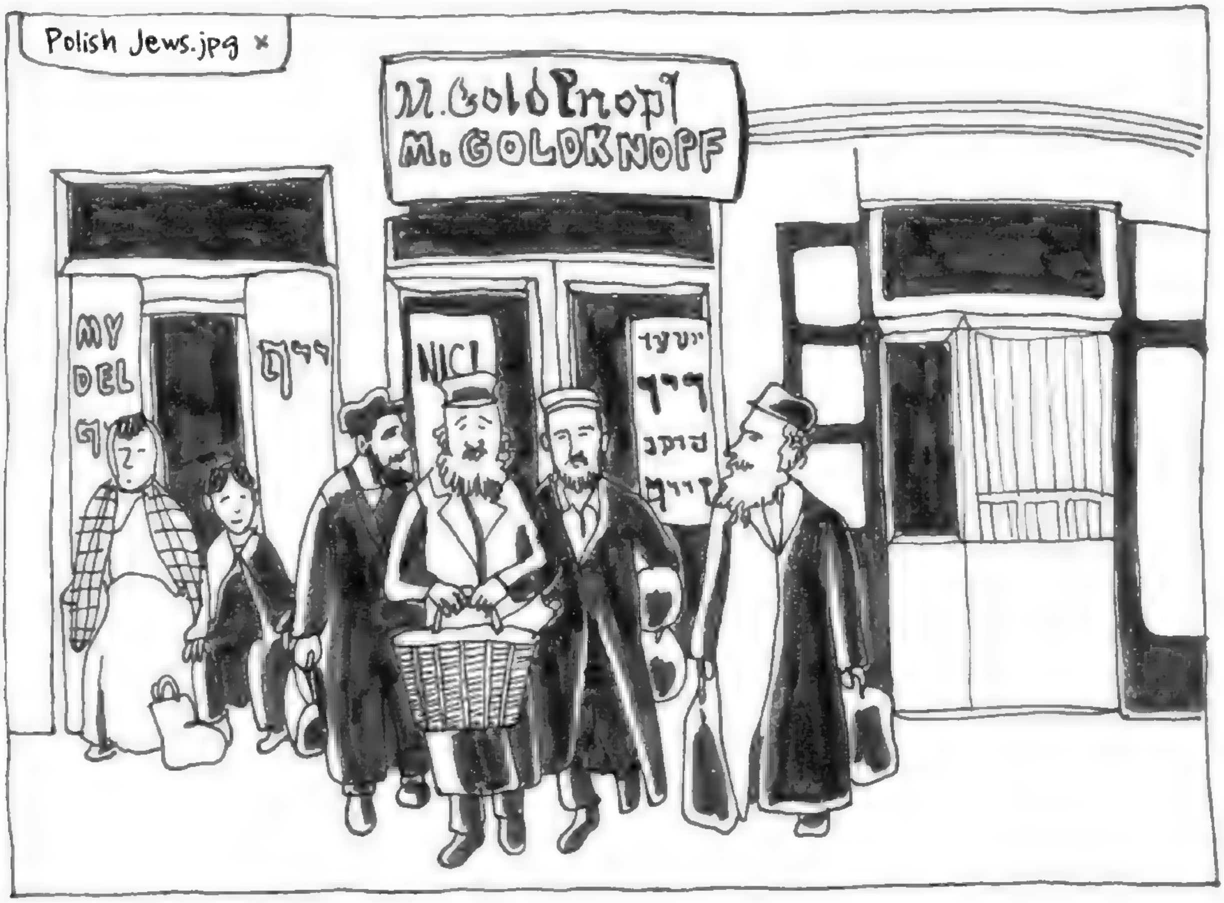

Hello? How are you, Annette?
Going to Poland with Martin.
So, uh, what was that recipe for knaidlach again?


Oh really? You going to see Auschwitz?

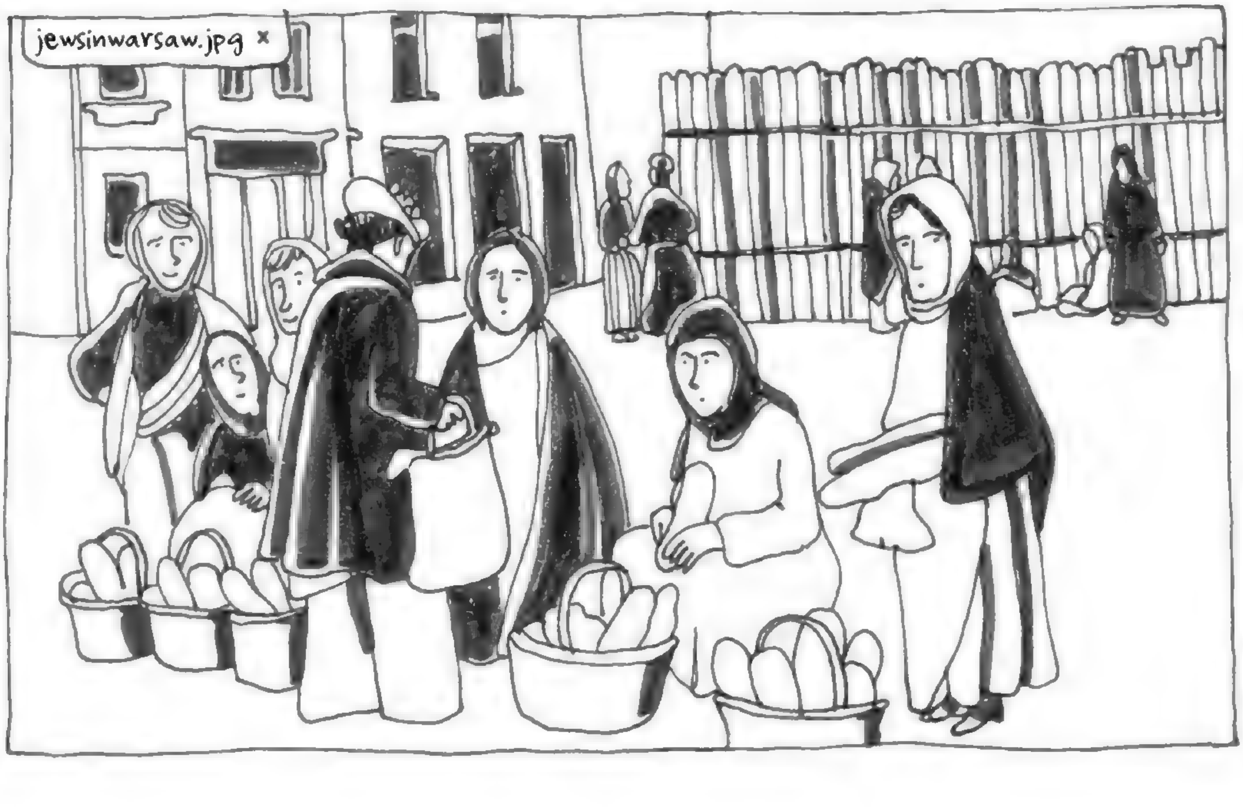
Auschwitz: five years of devastation for more than a thousand years of Jewish life and history.


Google
Polish Je
Search
About 254,000 results
Being Jewish in Poland

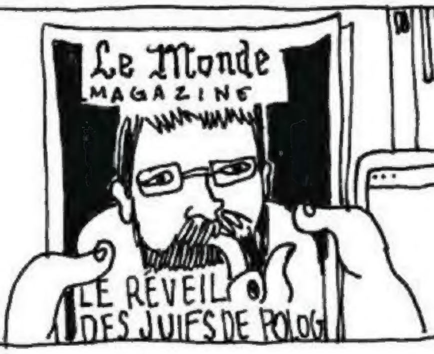
Before the Holocaust, Poland ranked second among countries in terms of a Jewish population (three and a half million). It was the cradle of Yiddish culture, which spread throughout Europe.


Polish Jews.jpg ×
M.Goldknopf
M. GOLDKNOPF
MY DEL
NICI

Auschwitz, a trauma still so present as to overshadow all the rest. But the rest was what I'd gone looking for in Poland.

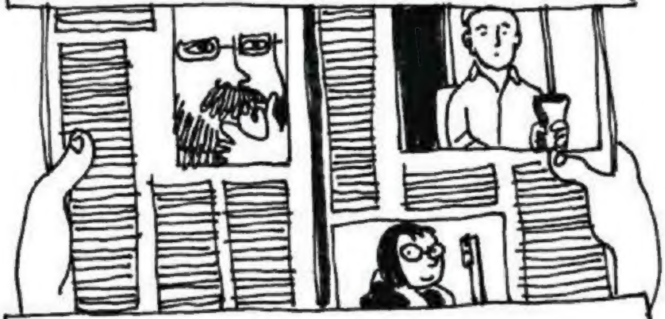

jewsinwarsaw.jpg ×

At first, I thought there'd be nothing left of them but archival images.


Le Monde
MAGAZINE
LE RÉVEIL DES JUIFS DE POLOG

An article by Olivier Guez hit me like an electric shock: there were still Jews in Poland!

So I reached out to people quoted in the article: Jan Spielberg of the youth organization Zoom.



Edward Odoner of the socio-cultural association TSKŻ. Both based in Warsaw.

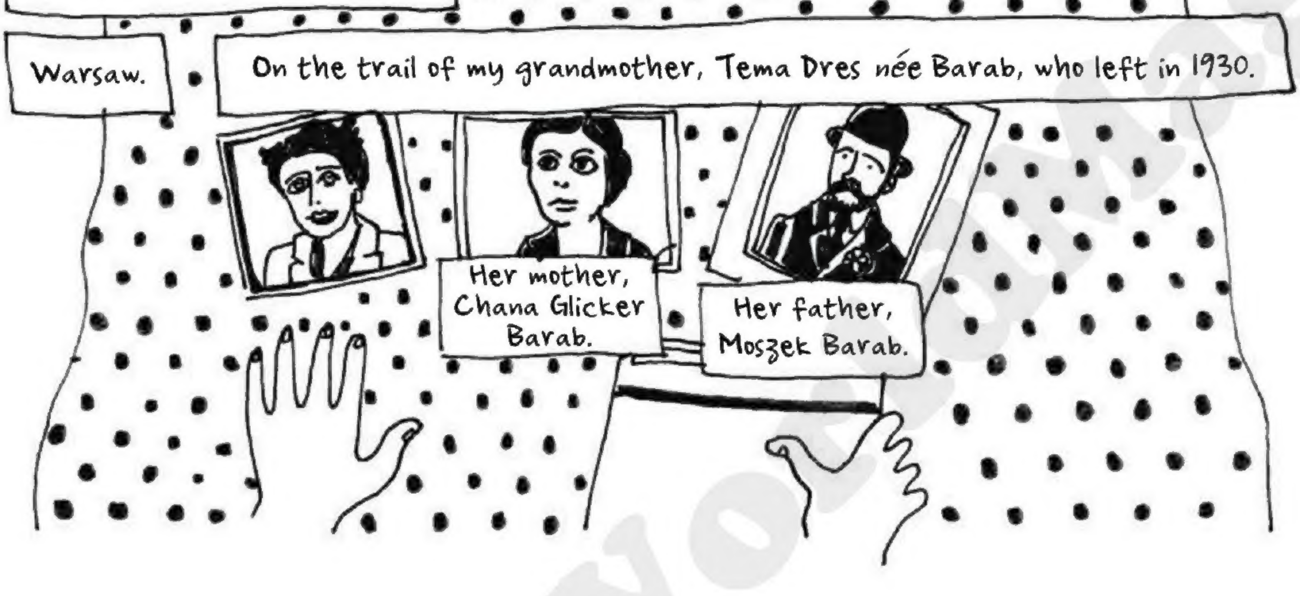
So the journey wouldn't just be a personal one. It'd bear witness to the future of an entire people...

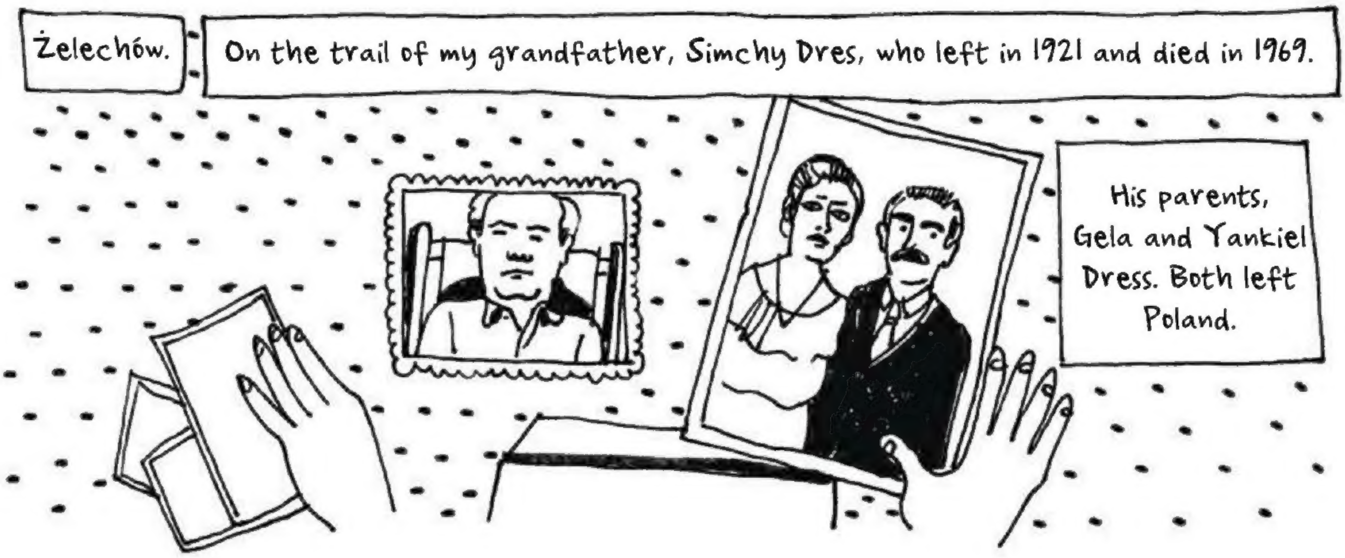
...to life before and after, over the course of my research into my family.

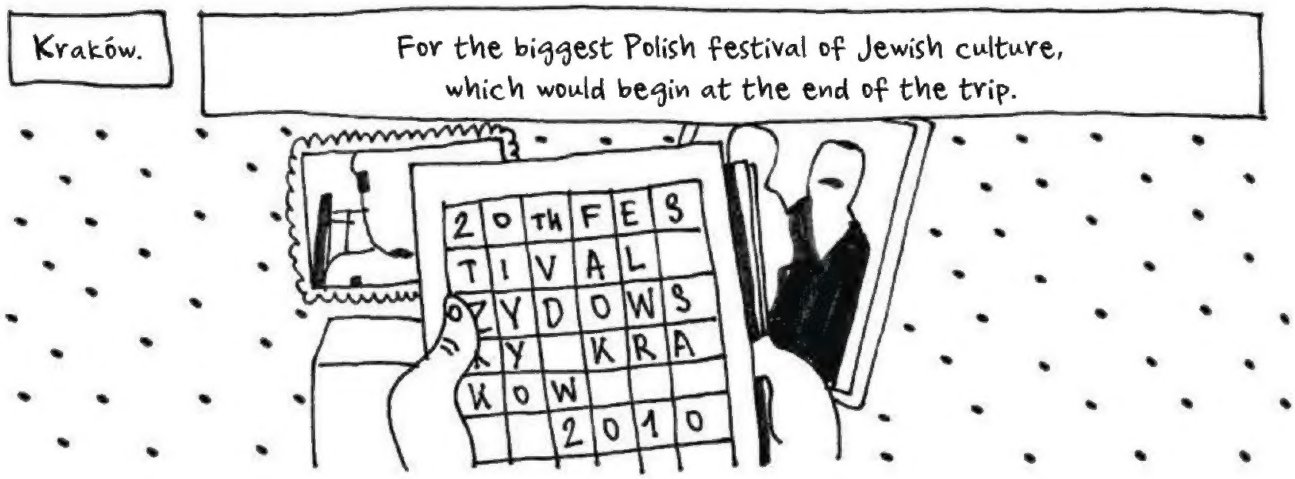
A journey in three stages.

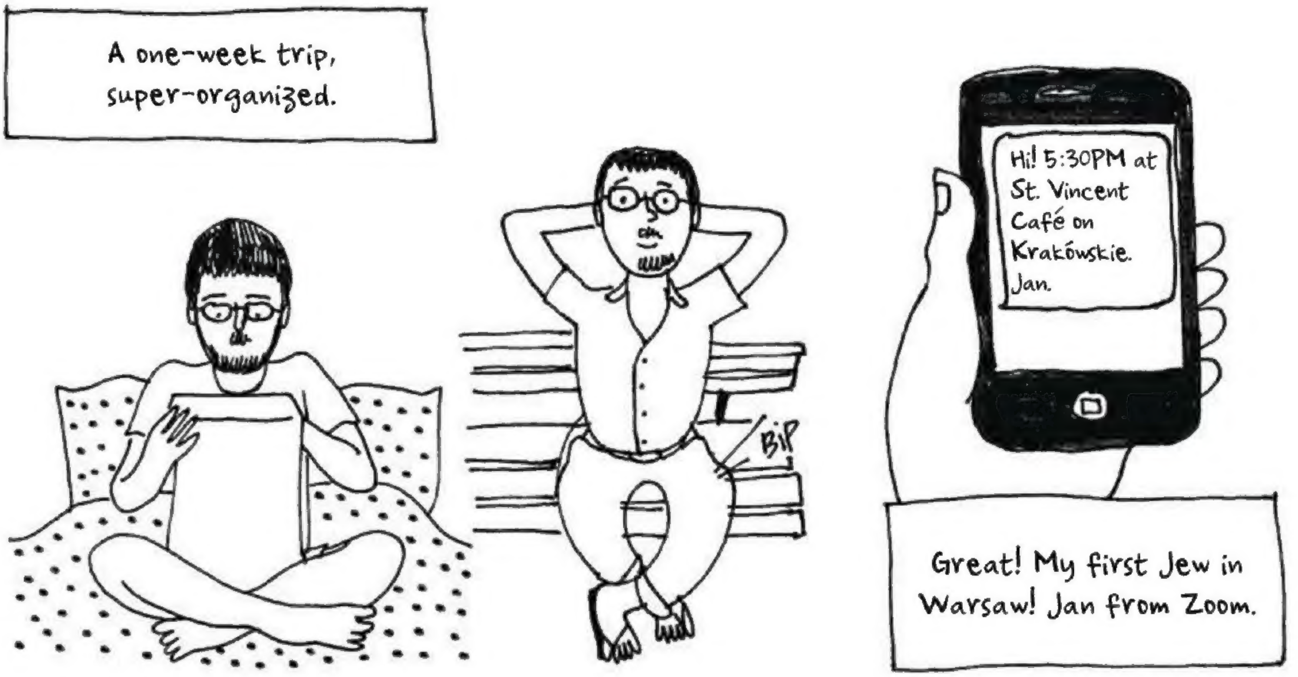
Warsaw.

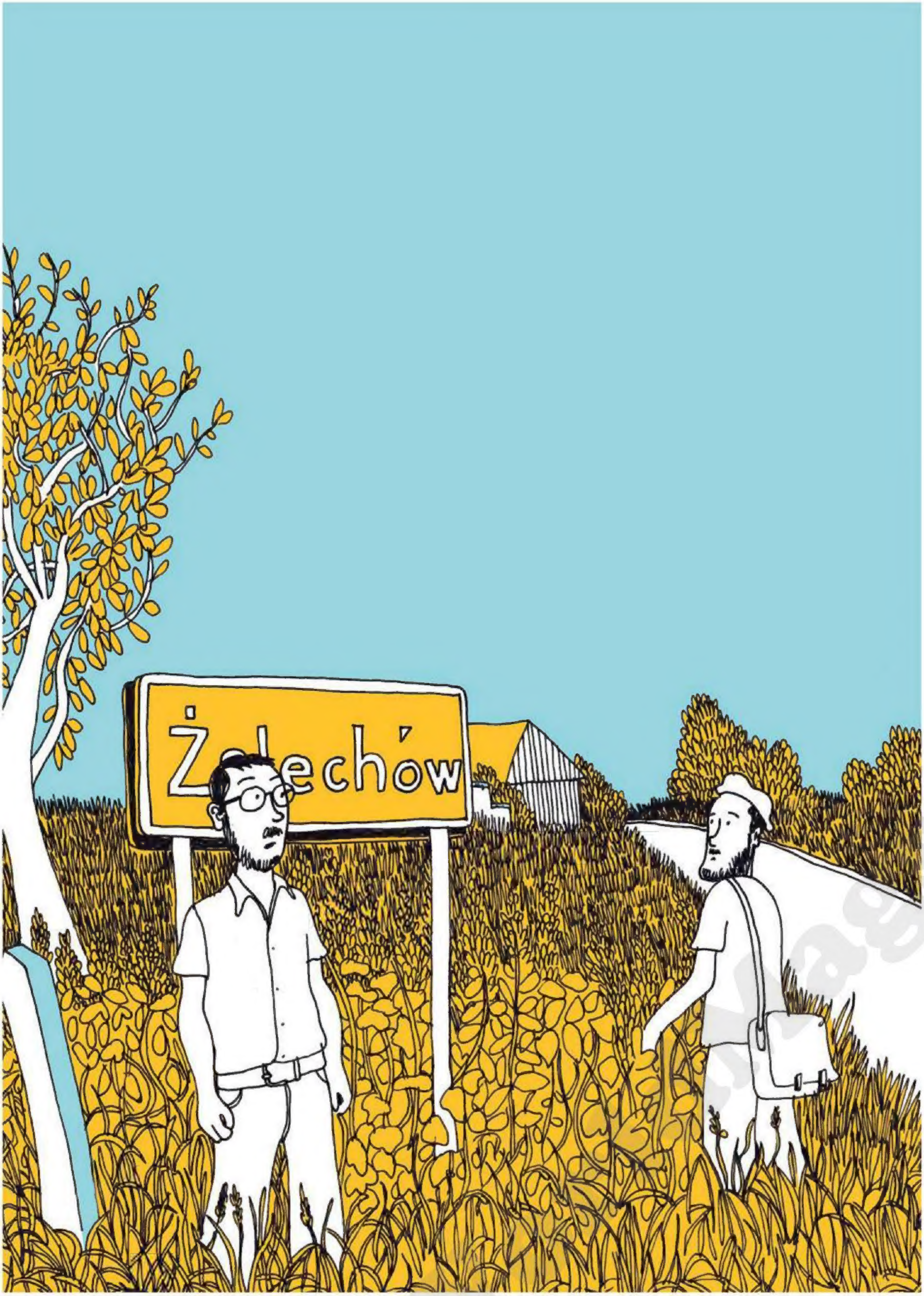
On the trail of my grandmother, Tema Dres née Barab, who left in 1930.


Her mother, Chana Glicker Barab.
Her father, Moszek Barab.


Żelechów.
On the trail of my grandfather, Simchy Dres, who left in 1921 and died in 1969.
His parents, Gela and Yankiel Dress. Both left Poland.


Kraków.
For the biggest Polish festival of Jewish culture, which would begin at the end of the trip.
20TH FES
TIVAL
ZYDOWS
Y KRA
KOW
2010


A one-week trip, super-organized.
BIP
Hi! 5:30PM at St. Vincent Café on Krakówskie. Jan.
Great! My first Jew in Warsaw! Jan from Zoom.

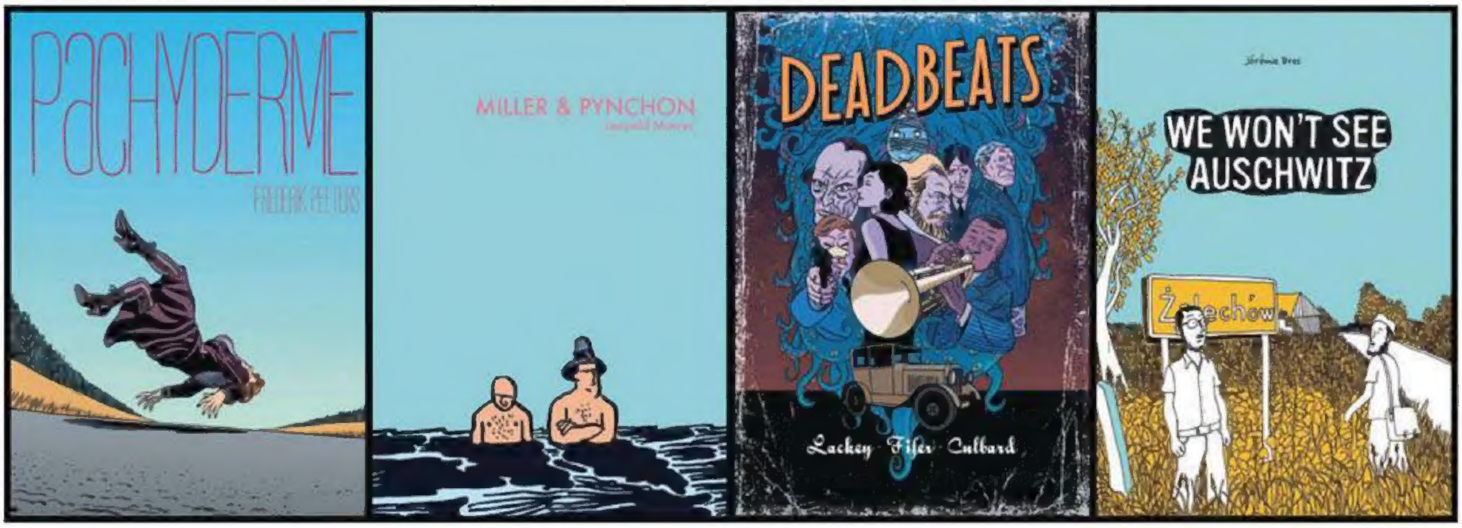


We Won't See Auschwitz SelfMadeHero / 208 pages / Out now

COMIC HEROES PRESENTS

LOCAL HEROES

Four incredible strips from SelfMadeHero, each extracted from a major graphic novel


PACHYDERME
FREDERIK PEETERS
MILLER & PYNCHON
Leopold Maurer
DEADBEATS
Lackey Fifer Culbard
Jérémie Dres
WE WON'T SEE AUSCHWITZ
Żelechów

Pachyderme

Frederick Peeters' incredible tale of dying elephants, strange hospitals and odd babies: like David Lynch meets Milan Kundera

Miller & Pynchon

Leopold Maurer's comedy of mismatched surveyors struggling with life, love and ambition; also, werewolves and talking crocodiles

Deadbeats

Jazz musicians on the run from a '20s Chicago mob bump into much worse, from Chad Fifer, Chris Lackey & INJ Culbard

We Won't See Auschwitz

Jérémie Dres takes a personal journey through modern Poland, exploring family history – and what it means to be Jewish

9001